

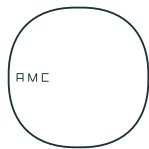
# メトロポリス METROPOLIS

December 2016 Japan's No.1 English Magazine  
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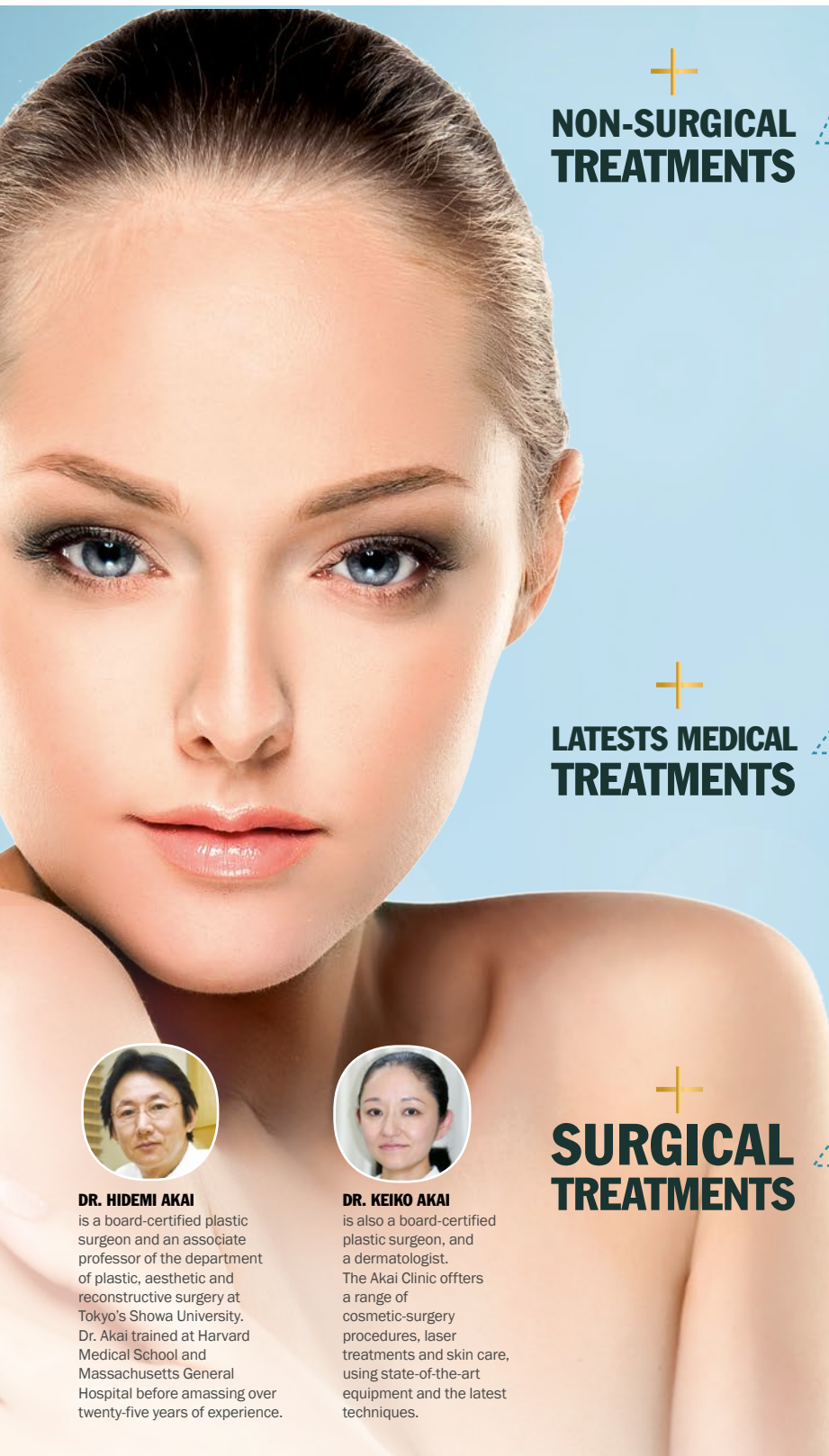
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# TO-DO LIST

Check full event listings on our Events page online!  
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## DEC 1-JAN 9 SWEETS BY NAKED

If you were ever entranced by the syrup-coated world inside Willy Wonka's factory, this one is for you. Fantasies come to life in this collaborative installation by NAKED Inc. Partnering with sweets companies including Magnolia Bakery, Ben & Jerry's and Hugo & Victor, the exhibition will use state-of-the-art computer graphics and projection mappings to realize a city with lampposts made of honey and planets made of chocolate. If you upgrade your ticket you can get some of the sweets to try yourself. Either way, get ready for a real-life sugar-spun wonderland. **Dec 1–Jan 9, 11am–9pm. Starting at ¥1,400 (adult) and ¥900 (child) or ¥1,200 and ¥700 in advance. Omotesando Hills, 3F, 4-12-12 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku. ☎ Omotesando. sweetsbynaked.com**



## DEC 2-3 CHICHIBU NIGHT FESTIVAL

Established over 300 years ago, this is one of Japan's top three *hikiyama* (float) festivals. The highlight is the show of six floats (headlined by two giant *kasaboko* floats) flaunting their way towards the city hall through the streets of Chichibu. Starting at around 7pm, the intricately-carved floats are laden with lanterns that magically sway as they're carried by men in *mawashi* (loincloths). This festival culminates in colorful fireworks, making the trip to this stunning natural location worth the effort. The festival finishes in time to catch the last trains back to Tokyo. **Dec 2–3, 1-3 Banbamachi, Chichibu-shi, Saitama-ken. ☎ Chichibu. www.sainokuni-kanko.jp/eng/festival/070**



## DEC 3 RUN SANTA RUN

Lace up your running shoes, adjust your beard and get ready, get set, go! The Run Santa Run is a 7km route through Tokyo, which participants dressed in Santa costumes can run, jog or walk. You and around 100 other Santas will come across some of the best Christmas illuminations in Tokyo, and you'll likely create quite a spotlight yourselves. Rudolph and a Christmas tree will be there to show you the way. No matter the pace, everyone comes back together for the afterparty at Propaganda Shot Bar, where the event also starts. The participation fee includes a naughty shot and two nice drinks, and you can hire a full Santa suit for an additional ¥1,000. **Dec 3, registration at 5:45pm. ¥3,000. Propaganda Shot Bar, 2F, 3-14-9 Roppongi, Minato-ku. ☎ Roppongi. www.tokyogaijins.com/upcoming/santa-run-2016dec3**



## DEC 14 PECHAKUCHA NIGHT

The formula for a PechaKucha presentation is 20x20: 20 images for only 20 seconds. It's the art of concise presentations, and December 14 will be a very merry edition. As is customary, this PechaKucha Night will have ten presenters lined up. They'll share their passion for viral hip-hop movements, architecture, city stories, sculpture and a cup of good cheer. Charles Spreckley will talk about People Make Places, a beautiful book on Tokyo's unique places and people, and you'll hear about working as a puppeteer from Tamiko Onagi. PechaKucha Night, originating in Tokyo in 2003, is now in over 900 cities worldwide—from San Jose to Reykjavik, and Singapore to Auckland. **Dec 14, 8:20pm. ¥1,000. SuperDeluxe, 3-1-25 Nishiazabu, Minato-ku. ☎ Roppongi. bit.ly/2fw2CF7**



## UNTIL DEC 18 THE ANATOMY OF COLORS

Since 1992, The Meguro Museum of Art has run five exhibits in its Anatomy of Colors series: "Blue," "Red," "Black and White," "Green," and "Yellow," which delved into the history, art, folklore and archaeology of those colors. The sixth show examines the rich palette of colors from the Edo period. The exhibit will feature *kuniezu*—luxuriously painted maps ordered by the Tokugawa government—and *ukiyo* woodblock prints. The shows will focus on opaque, inorganic hues with grainy qualities, such as blue-greens and vermilions, and translucent, organic shades of ochre yellow, "aobana" purplish-blues, "beni" crimsons and indigo. **Until Dec 18, 10am–6pm. ¥800. Meguro Museum of Art, 2-4-36 Meguro, Meguro-ku. ☎ Meguro. mmat.jp/exhibition/archives/ex161022**



## DEC 21 NISHIARAI DAISHI TEMPLE END OF YEAR FESTIVAL

Ring out the old year and get ready for the new at the Nishiarai Daishi Temple End of Year Festival in Adachi Ward. It is one of the three great temples belonging to the Buzan branch of Shingon Buddhism in Tokyo. The temple was established in 826 A.D. by Kukai, the sect's founder, and is flanked by a beautiful garden with a pond. Its annual *Osame no Daishi* (end of year) festival will offer lucky charms and festive foods to snack on. Keep an eye out for one lucky item in particular: the rake depicting the Seven Lucky Gods. There will also be musical performances and other entertainment throughout the day. **Dec 21, 9am–9pm. 1-15-1 Nishiarai, Adachi-ku. ☎ Daishi-Mae. www.nishiaraidaishi.or.jp/event/#event12\_1**





## DEC 3-4 COMIC CON

Comic Con, the famous US comic convention, is finally coming to Japan. In addition to Japanese content there will be a huge number of Hollywood actors and comic stars present. One will be Stan Lee, the iconic 93-year-old comic-book writer and former president of Marvel Comics. You'll recognize him from his cameos in most Marvel films. Don't miss the original Batsuit that was used for filming in *The Dark Knight Rises*, as well as autograph/photo sessions with Matthew Lewis (a.k.a. Neville Longbottom) and Jeremy Renner (a.k.a. Hawkeye). This, of course, is a great opportunity to cosplay, and there will be cosplay dressing rooms and a large cloakroom. **Dec 3, 10am–7pm; Dec 4 10am–7pm. ¥800–14,000. Makuhari Messe, 2-2-1 Nakase, Mihama-ku, Chiba.** ㉿ Kaihin-Makuhari. [www.tokyocomiccon.jp](http://www.tokyocomiccon.jp)



## DEC 3-FEB 19 ART RINK

An outdoor ice skating rink will pop up at the iconic Red Brick Warehouse in Yokohama. Each year, Art Rink gives a selected artist the opportunity to use the ice as their canvas. In its 12th incarnation this year, it's time for the students to have a go. The students in the fine art club of Yokohama Hiranuma Senior High School will create artwork inspired by the four seasons in Japan. It's a collation of the students' interpretation of Japan's seasons, intended to inspire visitors. You can hire skates if you don't have your own. A hot mulled wine from the German-style Christmas market next door will numb any sore backsides when you're done in the rink. **Dec 3–Feb 19. Weekdays 1–10pm; weekends and national holidays 11am–10pm. ¥500. 1-1 Shinko, Naka-ku, Yokohama, Kanagawa.** ㉿ Sakuragicho. [www.yokohama-akarenga.jp/artrink2016](http://www.yokohama-akarenga.jp/artrink2016)



## DEC 12 X-LEAGUE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

If you're already missing the NFL back home, then you certainly shouldn't miss the championship game of Japan's American Football competition. It's the final round of a thrilling season of the Japan X Bowl Tournament. The tournament plays all over the country, and the final game will be held at the Tokyo Dome sports mecca. It will be an exhilarating battle between the best two American Football teams of Japan. Their shot at being champions will be determined after the two semi-final games played in Osaka and Kanagawa in late November. Tickets can be bought on the day at the stadium or in advance. Gates open at 5pm for kick off at 7pm. **Dec 12, 7pm. ¥2,200–3,200. Tokyo Dome, 1-3-61 Koraku, Bunkyo.** ㉿ Suidobashi. [www.xleague.com/english](http://www.xleague.com/english)



## DEC 28-31 EDITOR'S PICK COUNTDOWN JAPAN

A huge neon timer ticks throughout this four-day music festival to count down to 2017. The impressive lineup includes a comprehensive mix of Japanese artists, from J-pop starlets and idol groups to veteran rock bands you didn't know were still together. Artists of note include Perfume, Radwimps and Sakanaction. Last year's event attracted 173,000 visitors and 178 musicians over four days. Amazingly it's all held indoors at the Makuhari Messe, but it does mean you can leave your rain boots at home for this festival. Also leave behind glass bottles, cans and selfie sticks. You can buy 1-, 2-, 3- or 4-day tickets at varying prices, depending on how much you love the lineup. **Dec 28–31. ¥11,500–35,000. Makuhari Messe, 2-2-1 Nakase, Mihama-ku, Chiba.** ㉿ Kaihin-Makuhari. [countdownjapan.jp](http://countdownjapan.jp)



## DEC 29-31 COMIKET

This bi-annual expo is all about showcasing *doujinshis*, or independent manga. This kind of manga spans various genres and subcultures, supporting self-expression for amateur and professional manga artists alike. You can browse countless booths of doujinshis and buy the ones that pique your interest. Comiket has free entry and is always popular for hardcore fans as well as curious visitors. As well as the comics, you should come for the cosplayers. Each year, the costumes become more and more elaborate, and most cosplayers love to pose for people taking photos (but only in the designated photography area on the patio). You'll have to pay ¥800 if you're planning on dressing up yourself. **Dec 29–31, 10am–4pm. Tokyo Big Sight, 3-11-1 Ariake, Koto.** ㉿ Kokusai-tenjijo-seimon. [www.comiket.co.jp/index\\_e](http://www.comiket.co.jp/index_e)



## UNTIL FEB 14 CANYON D'AZUR

Use Christmas shopping as an excuse to visit Caretta Shiodome and see the incredible illuminations set up at this shopping and entertainment complex. Starting at 5pm every night, an eight-minute show of twinkling rainbow lights and music will begin every 20 minutes. This year, the light installation is titled "Canyon d'Azur", which has no real translatable meaning but does indicate that it's fancy and blue. It features over 250,000 LEDs, including eight pillars of light that change as a bell rings. This is the 11th year of illuminations here, and it has become one of the best spots to see the lights around Tokyo at this time of year. **Until Feb 14, 5–11pm. Caretta Shiodome, 1-8-2 Higashishinbashi, Minato-ku.** ㉿ Shiodome. [www.caretta.jp/illumination2016](http://www.caretta.jp/illumination2016)



# THE ART OF JAPANESE PLATING

It looks good enough to eat

BY JESSICA THOMPSON

For anyone that has relished the delicately complex beauty of a *kaiseki* (multi-course) meal, has wondered why sushi looks particularly attractive in Japan or has tried to plate any meal ever and make it look half-decent, they may be relieved to hear that the splendor of Japanese plating is no coincidence. Putting food on a plate in restaurants in Japan is a highly codified process, an interplay of several cultural factors and accepted plating principles. Fundamental to it all is the intention of Japanese cuisine to not just appeal to the most immediate sensory denominator for food (taste), but to appeal also to the eye.

Here are several of the key concepts.

## BALANCE

A dish is considered well harmonized in Japanese cuisine when it feels peaceful to look at. Interestingly, symmetry is not a prerequisite for this, but quite the opposite. A bird's eye view of a Japanese plate will generally show an off-kilter, yet visually pleasing arrangement. Symmetry is regarded to be predictable, where asymmetry is tantalizing and engaging. Japanese culture also prizes asymmetry in numbers—3, 5 and 7 are found commonly in plating. Five, in particular, is regarded as auspicious and is reflected in many facets



of Japanese cuisine. The five senses—taste, sight, smell, hearing, touch—are regarded as important to a balanced meal. The five colors—red, blue (interpreted as green), yellow, white, black—are collectively represented in many dishes and meals. The five tastes—sweet, salty, savory, bitter, sour—are key to balancing flavor. Contrast is also important to balance in color and taste, as well in texture. Silky, creamy *chawanmushi* (steamed egg custard) comes topped with popping, briny roe. Bitter *mitsuba* greens are mixed with sweet rice and sour vinegar, served on a black dish, and covered with bright orange and salty-tasting grated *karasumi* (dried mullet roe). Garnishes like pieces of pickled daikon, a herb leaf, citrus zest, *chirimen* (dried

whitebait) and bonito flakes, add contrasting color accents, as well as help balance flavor and texture.

## SERVINGWARE

Western restaurants and homes have a tendency towards plain plates, and there is a sense of unity in a 'set.' In Japanese culture, it's the opposite—there is enjoyment in the expression of a variety of vessels. Japanese receptacles come in an array of shapes, sizes and colors, are made from pottery, glass and lacquer, and are often emblazoned with decorative patterns. Receptacles are chosen based on the dish to be presented, and often inspire a dish. The result is a technicolor kaleidoscope that somehow manages effortless composure—not unlike the vastly contrasting fabrics of a *junihi* (kimono of the ancient Japanese court).

## SEASONALITY

Japan's staunch allegiance to seasonal eating is unwavering. Each season is like a complete scene change on set, from what's featured on







in flavor and appearance; *Yama no katachi* is a mounded, mountain-like arrangement; For *sugimori*, food is in a conical shape that resembles a cedar (*sugi*) tree; *Kasane-mori* is vertically layered arrangement; *Nagashi-mori* is a mountain arrangement in a sunken vessel; *Yosemori* comprises two or three contrasting ingredients gathered centrally; *Chirashimori* is a 'scattered' arrangement, and thought to be the most difficult as it relies on the ability of chef to balance aesthetics of random arrangements; *Sansui-mori* is a landscape arrangement, and may include metaphorical elements such as fanned slices of fish to indicate waves; *Sugata-mori* is a 'figurative' arrangement, which is where a fish or other ingredient is placed in the shape of the original entity.

menus, cooked at dinner parties, in bento boxes, and at convenience store ice cream cabinets. Plating proudly showcases seasonal produce, as well as theming the colors of ingredients and servingware for a season—pink and green for spring, reds and gold for autumn. Noodles may come served in large bowls in winter and chilled on top of ice in bamboo baskets for summer. Even chopstick rests provide seasonal cues—a cherry blossom in spring and maple leaf in autumn.

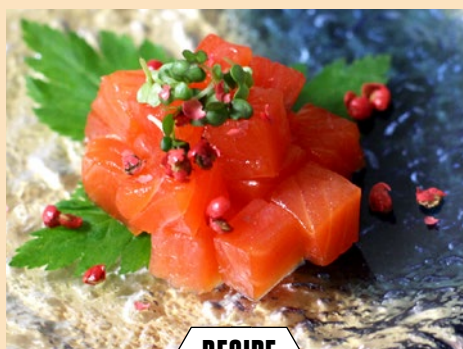
## EMPTY SPACE

In Western restaurants, plates are piled high and to the edges with food, and white space is usually the marking of a fine-dining establishment. In Japanese dining, plates are rarely fully covered—30% is considered the minimum amount of space to leave empty. This concept of empty space in Japanese culture is called *ma*, and echoes through many aspects of Japanese life. Japanese interior design

is famously minimalist, and traditional Japanese painting is often predominantly negative space. *Ma* is the void between things, an emptiness that is full of possibilities. In plating, this negative space focuses the diner's attention as distractions are omitted, as well as stimulating a connection from the eye to the palate by providing a sense of intrigue that makes the diner want to find out more.

## ARRANGEMENT

The arrangement of food on the plates of Japanese restaurants is largely dictated by the rules of *moritsuke*, or serving arrangement. These are a set of styles that draw on the ideas of balance and contrast, underpinned by *ma* and seasonality. Here are some of the most common. *Hiramori* is the arrangement of food on a flat plane. Similar sizes and colors of food are placed together, in a slanted direction. *Tenmori* is the final touch (using the kanji for 'heaven'), which provides balance



RECIPE

# SAKE-CURED SALMON

BY JESSICA THOMPSON

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons sake
- 50g salt
- 50g sugar
- 200g salmon (skin off)
- Mitsuha leaves and pink peppercorns, to serve

## PREPARATION

1. Combine sake, salt and sugar in a bowl and mix well.
2. Rub salmon thoroughly with the mixture, then add half the remaining mixture to a zip-lock bag and lay it flat.
3. Place salmon into the zip-lock bag on top of the layer of curing mixture, then top salmon



- with remaining mixture (alternatively you can use cling-film to tightly wrap the salmon in the cure, but a zip-lock bag is less fuss).
4. Seal the bag, place on a small tray, place another tray on top and add cans to weigh it down.
5. Place in baking dish and refrigerate for 12 hours, then turn the fillet over, ensuring the mix is evenly distributed around the salmon, and refrigerate for another 12 hours.
6. Carefully remove the salmon from the mixture, discarding any liquid. Rinse it gently under cold water and gently pat dry with paper towel.
7. To serve, slice salmon on the diagonal, or cut it into cubes.
8. Store any leftover salmon in plastic wrap in the refrigerator for up to one week.



## PLAYING WITH YOUR FOOD

Sakuratei gets creative with okonomiyaki

BY JOSHUA MCDOWELL



When I first came to Japan, nearly ten years ago, a very “in-the-know-friend” brought me to Sakuratei. It was my first time eating, and of course cooking, okonomiyaki. Over the next couple of years, I would return any time I had a friend or relative in town, to show them a side of the Tokyo food scene most tourists were unlikely to see.

At that time it seemed like one of the city’s best-kept secrets. Far away from the craziness of Takeshita Street, Sakuratei’s main entrance is hidden down one of Harajuku’s many twisting alleys. It was always better to go in the back way via a narrow path behind the elaborate facade of the Design Festa Gallery.

These days, the secret of Sakuratei is not so well-kept. There’s now a menu board in front of the path and a bright red arrow painted on the wall ensuring you don’t miss the “back entrance.” The main entrance still remains elusive, funnily enough.

But regardless of whether the secret’s out or not, a recent trip confirmed that this place remains my favorite okonomiyaki joint in the city. The food is great and the ambience is even better. The murals on the walls seem to have grown since my last visit, and every room is now covered floor to ceiling with bright, busy paintings. Don’t miss the three high school girls decorating the wall near the staircase with pregnant bellies poking out of their



sailor uniforms (presumably food babies).

The funky setting creates the perfect atmosphere for DIY food. The menu at Sakuratei includes appetizers, monjayaki—we had the *kaisen* (seafood) monja—and other items designed to be cooked on the iron teppan griddle at each table. But the real star here is the okonomiyaki. The menu features a huge variety, with some unique takes on the dish that you won’t find anywhere



else. Each comes with all ingredients uncooked in a single bowl. It’s then up to you to mix, grill and garnish your creations before digging in.

This is a fantastic group activity. Everyone wants a go at pouring and shaping the perfect okonomiyaki. Basting the savory, dark sauce and decorating with mayonnaise, powdered seaweed and bonito flakes became something of a competition. We sampled three bowls: the *kurobota* (pork) bowl, the three-cheese special, and the healthy special (an interesting mix of avocados and beans, among other things, with a side of salsa for dressing).

The pork was easily the best. Pretty much your classic okonomiyaki with big thick cuts of pork belly mixed in. Once it’s steaming hot and covered in sauce and mayo, it’s a little sweet, a little savory and as good as I’ve had.

The three-cheese was next. As crazy as cheese sounds paired with the cabbage in okonomiyaki, it worked surprisingly well. Everyone agreed it was a successful experiment. But be warned: you’re going to want to oil the grill well before melting cheese all over it.

While the hot, mushy avocado of the healthy special didn’t put me off as much as I expected it might, I’m afraid salsa as an okonomiyaki topping doesn’t really work. It wasn’t inedible, but I wouldn’t order it again.

Sakuratei also offers an interesting dessert, with an equally novel way to order it. The dish, called Banayan, can be ordered for ¥500. But you can choose to *janken* (rock, paper, scissors) with your waiter for a better deal. If you win, you get the dessert for free. If you lose, you’re out ¥700. Despite being more than full and sitting by a clean teppan after a final order of yakisoba, we just couldn’t pass up something that was so in keeping with the night’s theme of creativity and innocent competition.

We lost. So for ¥700, we received what looked like a banana split and a glass of milk. Our waiter told us to pour the banana split on the grill until it began to congeal, and then slowly add the milk in the center, little by little until it became thick enough to eat with the tiny monjayaki spatulas. In the end, it tasted like hot, condensed milk with bananas. But I’ll let you find out what grilling and mashing cornflakes, chocolate sauce, banana, ice cream and milk looks like on your own. **3-20-1 Jingūmae, Shibuya-ku. 11am-12am. 03-3479-0039. [www.sakuratei.co.jp](http://www.sakuratei.co.jp)**





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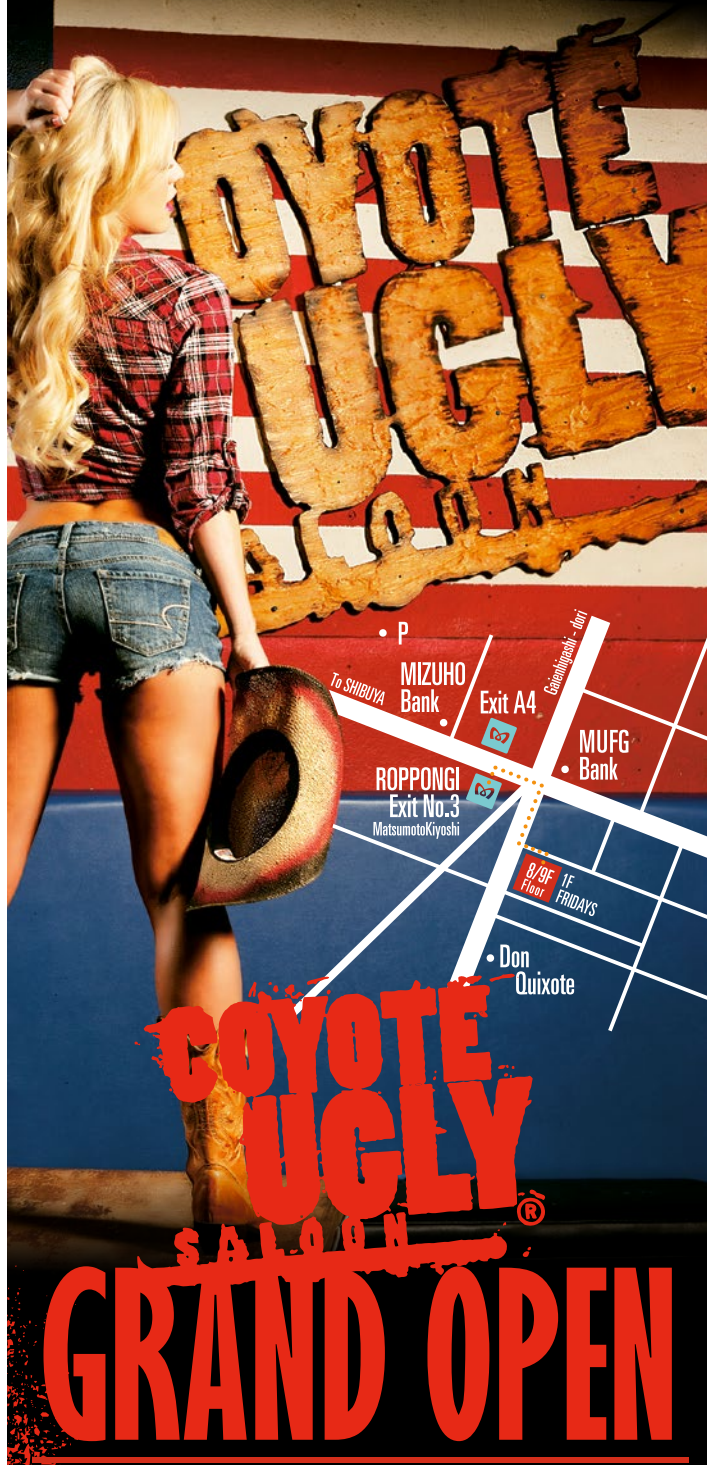
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is also accessible without boarding a plane through its Live Cinema Season. A much lighter Mozart opera, *Così fan tutte*, screens December 9–15, with the bedroom farce transplanted to a modern setting. Upcoming performances in the season include *The Nutcracker* and *Il Trovatore*. For theaters, see [www.tohotowa.co.jp/roh](http://www.tohotowa.co.jp/roh).

## A look behind the curtain at the Paris Opera

Ballet is offered in the documentary *Reset*. It traces new director Benjamin Millepied's efforts to stage his first production with the world's oldest national ballet troupe. Millepied's work on the film *Black Swan* led to him marrying Natalie Portman. Also on from December 23 at Le Cinema.



© ROH/Stephen Cumiskey 2016

Tokyo's cinemas bring viewers the finest of world culture—both past and present—with a number of special screenings in December. First up, the **Met Live Viewing** program continues to present the best performances from New York's famed Metropolitan Opera. The Met is known for its Mozart, and a gorgeous production of *Don Giovanni* is on December 3–9. For theaters, see [www.shochiku.co.jp/met](http://www.shochiku.co.jp/met).

One of the great sanctuaries of culture gets the documentary treatment in *Teatro Alla Scala: The Temple of Wonders*. The doc features 4K footage that captures the splendid architecture of **Milan's La Scala opera house** as well as behind-the-scenes preparations and archival footage of past masterpieces and famous visitors. On from December 23 at Bunkamura's Le Cinema (2-24-1 Dogenzaka, Shibuya-ku; [www.bunkamura.co.jp](http://www.bunkamura.co.jp)).

EIGA

## JAPANESE GIRLS NEVER DIE

BY ROB SCHWARTZ

Director Daigo Matsui's interpretation of Mariko Yamauchi's 2013 novel of the same name premiered in the Competition section at this year's Tokyo International Film Festival and it's a breath of fresh air. Inventive, challenging, puzzling and creative, the film is not your typical narrative, which is so much the better for cinema. There are three seemingly separate stories that all intertwine and relate to misogyny in Japan, the challenges women face in the country and the ennui of its millennial generation. A band of Japanese high school girls is going around randomly beating men senseless. This is more or less a backdrop to the life of Haruko (Yu Aoi), an aimless 27-year-old who can't find any satisfaction and sees injustice around her. At the same time (that phrase is key) you have graffiti artists Manabu



©2016 「アズミ・ハルコは行方不明」製作委員会

(Shono Hayama) and Yukio (Taiga) stenciling Haruko's missing poster around town. The pair stole the image from a police box. So, despite the fact one scenario depicts Haruko as missing, she is living a normal life at home with her parents and grandmother, and going to a boring office job where she and another female employee do all the work and earn a tiny fraction of what the men get. The film never attempts

to reify this paradoxical timeline. Rather, the narrative floats in a space where chronology is less important and the shades of emptiness of the characters' lives are more at the forefront. Thought-provoking and in tune with a generation searching for meaning, *Japanese Girls Never Die* is a quizzical kind of brilliance. (Japanese title: *Azumi Haruko wa yukue fumei*; 100 min.)



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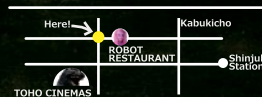
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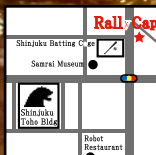


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## FEATURED MOVIE

## ANTS ON A SHRIMP

"New Nordic" pioneer chef René Redzepi has guided his acclaimed Copenhagen eatery Noma to "World's Best Restaurant" honors for 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2014. Pretty impressive. But complacency is apparently not in the restless Redzepi's DNA.

Casting about for a new challenge, he hit upon the idea of temporarily uprooting the entire restaurant and replanting it, staff and all, in our fair megalopolis (at The Mandarin Oriental) for a five-week, sold-out run.

Dutch director Maurice Dekkers follows the

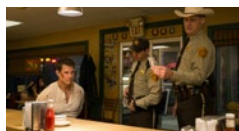
process with this involving, observational documentary.

Redzepi's talented sous-chefs arrive a month early and begin work on creating 14 new dishes that adhere to Noma's ethos of combining local ingredients with disciplined creativity; dishes that would be unique to Japan and at the same time respectful of its traditions.

We follow them as they tour Japan in search of not just the right ingredients, but also an innate understanding of those ingredients and how they relate to Japan's rigorous food culture.

What makes this more than reality-show food porn is the atmosphere the genially demanding Redzepi fosters with his dedicated staff. He's the antithesis of the temperamental "celebrity chef." When he criticizes a dish ("It's ingredients with a sauce"), it is received totally without rancor and actually as a compliment, because he's saying its creator is capable of excellence as opposed to something merely very, very good.

Entertaining and edifying, this will be of special interest to anyone living here, foodie or not. (88 min). Japanese title: *Noma Tokyo*.



## JACK REACHER: NEVER GO BACK

Tom Cruise, at 5' 7" and 160 lbs., continues the laughable self-delusion that he can bring off the

6'3", 230 lb. lethally righteous, nomadic ex-Army hero of Lee Child's popular male-escape-fantasy page-turners. And what's Edward Zwick (*Glory*, *Legends of the Fall*, *Blood Diamond*) doing making this anonymous, low-rent, adrenalin-free swill? Tritely written, visually bland, and emotionally vacuous, this is disposable studio product for undiscerning mainstream action fans. All others are hoping Cruise will take the implied advice in the title regarding this misguided franchise. (118 min)



## EVERY THING WILL BE FINE

In Wim Wenders's latest meandering, angst-ridden navel-gazer, a moody writer (James Franco) driv-

ing around and thinking deep thoughts after a marital spat hits and kills a little girl. We revisit him over the next 12 years to see how he's dealing with the consequences of the accident. It's nicely shot and has an initially intriguing premise, but this is arrogant filmmaking at its worst, a ponderous, airless slog that goes absolutely nowhere. It might have been more effective with a real actor in the lead. But probably not. Also an adequate Rachel McAdams and a criminally underused Charlotte Gainsbourg. Japanese title: *Dareno sei demonai*. (118 min)



## A BIGGER SPLASH

A rock star (Tilda Swinton) recovering from throat surgery and her filmmaker husband (Matthias Schoenaerts) are resting

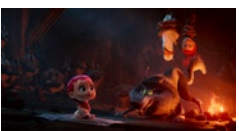
up on a remote Italian island when their tranquility is shattered by the abrupt and not entirely welcome arrival of an old flame (Ralph Fiennes, amusingly over the top) and his daughter (Dakota Johnson). There's no conventional plot or clear moral in Luca Guadagnino's lush and lurid behavioral drama, but the sexual tension is high and constant. While I initially dismissed this as pretentious Eurotrash, by the end credits I found myself completely under its ambiguous, wicked spell. (125 min) Japanese title: *Munesawagi no shichiria*.



## MISS YOU ALREADY

Two lifelong BFFs (Drew Barrymore & Toni Collette, straining for chemistry) leave no cliché unturned as they

face the challenges of adulthood. Then one of them gets sick. Well, of course it's manipulative; it's a cancer weepie. Plus it's directed by Catherine Hardwicke, who's currently under indictment for *Twilight*. But it's unabashedly so, and doesn't shy away from the hard bits. It's tonally a mess, but likeably gushy and even funny in places. Call it a better-acted, less annoying *Beaches*. Bottom line: Nothing new, but compulsively watchable for Collette's sweeping, exuberant performance. Japanese title: *My Best Friend*. (112 min)



## STORKS

Alleged plot has the stork genus repurposed, for corporate profit reasons, from baby to parcel delivery, until one darling little

big-eyed neonate brings it all back home, so to speak, with an obligatory message about family and belonging, etc. It's thematically scattered, questionably motivated, heavy on the pop-culture gags, and so relentlessly paced it's like it's on fast-forward. Bottom line: a charmless, generic, too-cute babysitting movie full of movement, sound and color that's aimed at distracting the kids for a while without giving parents too big a headache. No fun. Japanese title: *Koutonori taisakusen*.



## EVERYBODY WANTS SOME!!

You may think at first that this is some kind of lame coming-of-age flick about baseball jocks at a

Texas college. But not far in, you become aware of hidden depths and thoughtful undercurrents, and by the end you may want more. For this is another easygoing masterwork from Richard Linklater (the *Before* trilogy, *Waking Life*, *Boyhood*). Gleefully plotless, this semi-autobiographical, slyly wise and somehow wholesome sex comedy boasts a charismatic no-star cast and is about the joy of being 18, on the brink of adulthood, living in the moment and hoping to hook up with someone you like. I may watch it again. (117 min)



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# DESIGN ANATOMY

A dissection of the products in your fridge

BY C.B.LIDDELL



Some of you might remember the film, *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. There is a bit of that at the latest exhibition at 21\_21 Design Sight.

Titled "Design Anatomy," the show takes an in-depth look at several key brands—including yogurt, milk and a mushroom-shaped sweet snack—and in the process blows their packaging up to enormous sizes, giving one a sense of what it might be like to be shrunk to ant size.

One of the first things that greets you as you descend into the stylish, Tadao-Ando-designed concrete bunker that is 21\_21, is a skull of Licca-chan, a popular doll that rivals Barbie in sales in Japan. While I couldn't help taking it as a kawaii memento mori, its role is supposed to be more positive. It is intended to help designers think more deeply about a product some of us may dismiss as a superficial piece of plastic, and in the process give it a certain "depth" and a back story.

After leaving the doll behind, you encounter what seems like a shrine to Kinoko no Yama ("Hill of Mushrooms"), a

mushroom-themed confectionary. The exhibition director Taku Satoh is well-known for his work on various mass market items, and the display here reveals the degree of thought and general all-round pondering that goes into every aspect of the product, from its flavor, look and texture, to its name, image and even the typeface used.

While this makes obvious sense when viewed from a business perspective, it makes rather less sense from a layman's point of view and seems somewhat obsessive. We have 3-D models of the 2-D images used on the packaging, rows of mushroom prototypes, and computer simulations of how different snacks jiggle around in a box. Then there is the giant model and cross section of one of the tiny shrooms!

The same treatment is given to ice cream, yogurt and milk brands, with a giant ice cream tub cut right down the middle and an enormous carton that lies there as if discarded by a lactose-intolerant giant, with a cow installation looking on as it is milked.

As the exhibition title suggests, Satoh is

applying the idea of dissecting animals to products, to better understand design parameters.

"We instead dissect design, analyzing the graphic elements such as the layout and printing of the logos and packages of the products, and performing detailed analysis and observations of the products' inner workings," he writes in the exhibition notes.

This sounds plausible enough, but I found myself thinking that I was getting too much boring trivia. For example, the display for Meiji Bulgaria Yogurt has dozens of spoons, all holding globules of pretend yogurt of supposedly different textures and consistency.

Also, how do we explain the manic supersizing of the packaging? I think the real reason is that it adds a Gulliverian charm to what would otherwise be a very dull show. It was well attended, mainly by design-student types. Strangely, though, none of them seemed put off by the show's apparent message that design is 99.9% perspiration—and tediously trying every conceivable combination—and just 0.1% creative inspiration.



# HOUSES OF MUSIC

The best music venues that emerged this year

BY PATRICK ST. MICHEL

Over the last few years, Tokyo's club scene has been hampered by the nation's *fueiho* laws, or anti-dancing rules. Although the capital wasn't hit as hard by these restrictions—which required nightclubs to close down by midnight—as other Japanese cities, Tokyo's nightlife did suffer. Police clamped down on a variety of venues, many catering to fans of music. Yet earlier this year, those laws were revised so clubs could stay open later and continue to play music without fear of a visit from law enforcement. Those fond of all-nighters, rejoice.

Coincidentally (or not), 2016 has seen several new music-centric venues open up across Tokyo. Spurred on by a boom in live music, these new spots have helped expand the city's nightlife options, each one offering its own character and highlighting a mix of styles to clubgoers living in or visiting the metropolis. Here are some of the more notable entries to emerge in the city over the past 12 months.

## CONTACT

Operated by the same company previously in charge of Shibuya club Air, Contact caters to the same underground techno and house clientele that used to be regulars at the old hotspot. Since opening this past spring, the basement venue has attracted some of the more buzzed-about names in the electronic dance community, including Floating Points and Black Coffee. The organizers behind the space hope those that come can get lost in the music, to the point that they forget about snapping pictures or checking messages on their phone. Recommended for serious dance fans, 20 years and older.

[www.contacttokyo.com](http://www.contacttokyo.com)

**Noteworthy December Show: Fumiya Tanaka and Cabanne, Dec 22**

## SANKEYS TYO

Speaking of Air...the recently opened Sankeys TYO occupies the exact same subterranean spot, with the upstairs cafe now housing the Cuban-fusion restaurant Cafe Habana. The name comes from long-running Manchester club Sankeys, but the actual lineups they put together skew pretty closely to what Air used to do, with a variety of house and techno acts playing all night in the Daikanyama neighborhood. Sankeys TYO also occasionally puts on live shows earlier in the evening, but it's the night time programming that should get you out. [www.sankeystokyo.info](http://www.sankeystokyo.info)

**Noteworthy December Show: Julian Perez, Satoshi Otsuki and more, Dec 17**

## WWW X

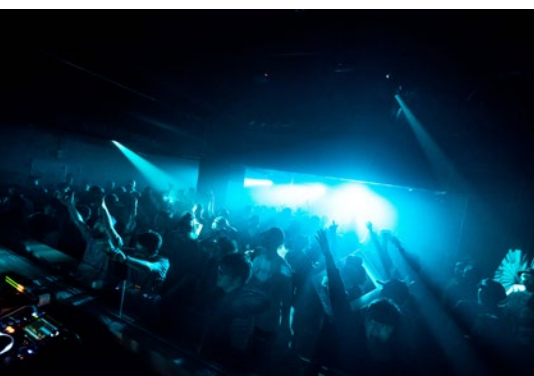
Shibuya's WWW has become one of the top spots for rock and electronic music over the last few years. This fall, the venue expanded by opening WWW X on the fourth floor of the same building, complete with a cozy lounge area and bar space. The main floor space features ample room to watch artists on stage and dance around, whether you are checking out a rock group, a DJ or even an idol group doing their thing. WWW X has its finger on the pulse of the city's music scene. [www-shibuya.jp/schedule/#wwwx](http://www-shibuya.jp/schedule/#wwwx)

**Noteworthy December Show: Shugo Tokumaru, Dec 11**

## CIRCUS TOKYO

Circus Osaka has been one of Kansai's best spots for electronic music over the last few years, and late last year a Tokyo branch opened in Shibuya (which, if you can't tell from this list, is where this new boom is unfolding). Like its forefather in the west, Circus Tokyo is a relatively intimate space, which makes it great for indie-leaning artists. The spot primarily hosts techno acts, though it's also a hotspot for wonkier bass artists and other performers who have come to attention in the age of SoundCloud. But certain days might also see Circus hosting a J-pop show, an evening of Chicago juke or even an idol concert. [circus-tokyo.jp/en](http://circus-tokyo.jp/en)

**Noteworthy December Show: FaltyDL, Dec 9**





FASHION  
ABLE

## Behind tenbo, a fashion brand for people with disabilities

BY SEAN MAY

Takafumi Tsuruta's grandmother developed dementia 10 years ago. As her condition worsened, she began using a wheelchair as a preventive measure—her worried family didn't want her to wander off and get lost.

Back then, Tsuruta was a budding fashion designer, honing his craft while working for the label Hiroko Koshino. One day, he decided to make his grandmother an outfit. Tsuruta wanted her to look good and feel good despite her condition. But when he visited his grandmother to present her with his creation, a jacket and a pair of pants, he found that dressing a person seated in a wheelchair was difficult, and that fitting a pair of pants on someone sitting down was no easy task.

"That was my first hint," Tsuruta said. "That was when I first starting thinking that I wanted to make clothes that are functional and fashionable."

A decade later Tsuruta is doing just that. He established tenbo in January 2015, with the goal of creating a fashion brand that was inclusive of all people, disabled or not. He debuted his collection at Fashion Week Tokyo—the most revered runway in Japan—and in doing so, tenbo became the first brand in Japan to feature both disabled and able-bodied models together in a



All photos by Elle Harris of Ellenote Photography



single show.

Accessibility is central to tenbo designs. tenbo clothing is made to be worn by both disabled and able-bodied people. tenbo designers make certain functional choices in their designs to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.

"When I first started looking into clothing for disabled people, it shocked me that the designs were all unattractive, they were purely functional," Tsuruta said. "I wanted to use my fashion background to change that."

The clothing line aims to make fashion accessible to people with disabilities. That is Tsuruta's vision. And when examining tenbo clothing, this is clear in the little details of each design. Buttons on shirts are magnetic, allowing people with disabilities like Parkinson's disease to dress themselves freely. Pants have elastic waists, making it easier to wear for people in wheelchairs.

"The most important thing is to listen," said Tsuruta, "to actually engage with disabled people to find out what they want. I've learned a lot about impairments in the last few years."

And Tsuruta's willingness to listen is perhaps the reason why the brand has gained traction with the disabled community. To the frequent collaborators of tenbo, the brand is more than a maker of fashionably functional clothes—it is a community.

Go to a tenbo show and you will see. tenbo hires people with disabilities to usher guests to their seats. Disabled people who are fans of the

brand attend the shows, and many of the models themselves are disabled.

Tsuruta says he has received positive feedback from tenbo collaborators. They seek him out because they believe in the brand's philosophy. And they come from the world over. A French woman visited Japan to partake in a recent tenbo show. tenbo has created a space for disabled people to express themselves through fashion, yet globally, disability fashion remains largely unexplored.

Despite these successes, heading tenbo hasn't always been easy for Tsuruta. Early on, he had to deal with the stigma of establishing a fashion brand for the disabled. Some called him out for being exploitative.

Tsuruta would be the first to admit that his venture isn't purely a moral pursuit. It is equally a business decision as well; when Tsuruta decided to strike out on his own as a designer, the fashion market was saturated with cheap mass-produced fashion chains like Zara and Forever 21, and he felt he needed an entirely different concept to succeed.

In the end though, Tsuruta measures his success by how his designs are received by the people.

"I'm happiest when my models and customers smile while wearing my clothes," Tsuruta said. "That's success for me."



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# UNBROKEN WITH GOLD

The art of turning ugly breaks into beautiful fixes

BY THERESE DETJE

**N**o one likes to rummage through trash cans. Yet there I was, crouching in my kitchen with breath sucked in, arms-deep, feeling through eggshells, plastic wrappers and unidentified goo. Finally, I retrieved what I was looking for. The pieces of porcelain were once a bowl I used for soy sauce. Earlier that day, I had signed up for a kintsugi workshop, and I knew just what I wanted to resurrect.

The Japanese art of kintsugi is one of repairing pottery that was accidentally broken or chipped. It's a technique that uses lacquer mixed with powdered gold, silver or platinum to glue pieces back together. The effect leaves striking metallic veins running through the pottery.

Late on a Saturday morning in a cold drizzle, the door to Kontacto East studio in Nishiazabu stands open, emitting a glow and the gentle hum of voices. Inside is the fully-booked workshop of 10 students. The teacher, Midori Sasahara of Kintsugi Oh!LaLa, flits around the large communal table.

She peers over the shoulder of each student and helps us individually. Sasahara's English was good enough that I easily followed each step. Her style is a modern version of kintsugi using super glue, putty and gold-colored brass powder. We are each able to fix two to



three items in the three-hour workshop. She told me the traditional technique can take one to three weeks, a process in which craftsmen use long-drying resins and lacquers from trees instead of super glue and putty. They also used real gold to paint over the cracks.

Kintsugi is about accepting that something has been broken, rather than denying it by throwing it away. The breakage and repair becomes part of the object's identity. In the process, we create something that we come to love. It's known as the IKEA Effect, where we connect with objects that we've created ourselves and ascribe a special meaning to them (just as we feel affectionate towards our IKEA furniture because we've arduously assembled it ourselves).

It's raining even harder outside, and the door is still open to the street. Occasionally, someone under an umbrella walks past and looks in. It feels very cozy inside: warm and dry, with jazz playing in the background. The loft-like studio space is beautifully designed with high ceilings, exposed ducts and pipes and big wooden floorboards. It's comforting knowing we're here for a few hours with no rush to keep up with everyone else.

I sensed that this kind of workshop was a way for people to meet others. Everyone

concentrates on their own work but listens in on the conversations around the table. No one is too shy to look at how their neighbor is doing and compliment them on their work. Occasionally everyone chuckles at something someone at the table has said.

In practice, kintsugi is not that creative—there's only really one possible successful outcome in sticking the pieces back together as they were. But kintsugi provides a beautiful philosophy to living creatively. It reminds us that we can fix problems we face in life. Things will break but can be accepted and made into something more meaningful to us. Creativity is about taking risks and expressing ourselves, making our everyday world more vibrant.

My finished bowl now sits in a privileged position on the entrance table at my apartment. It serves a new purpose of holding my keys. The bowl has been revived and I love it more than ever.

Kontacto East organizes kintsugi workshops a few times a year. They are a small hardworking team who connects local creatives with the community. They collaborate with local artists, foodies and craftsmen to run different workshops throughout the year. Look out for other workshops, including modern-style bonsai classes, traditional calligraphy workshops, and specialty food courses making bread, miso paste or natto from scratch.

**Kontacto East Studio. 1F, 2-25-11, Nishiazabu, Minato-ku. ☎ Roppongi. Tel: 03-6427-7725. [welcome@kontacto.jp](mailto:welcome@kontacto.jp). [kontacto.jp](http://kontacto.jp)**

## OTHER WORKSHOPS AROUND TOKYO

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### SAMURAI CLASS

There are a handful of modern-day samurai around who offer private or group lessons. We took a traditional swordsmanship class with a katana master through Viator, a TripAdvisor company that lets you experience unique activities with locals. We could choose the location (a park or local dojo) and even hold our instructor's very sharp 500-year-old sword. [www.viator.com/search/samurai](http://www.viator.com/search/samurai)

### PLASTIC FOOD MAKING

Learn to make a delicious-looking meal using only one ingredient: plastic. You've probably been lured into a restaurant by replica foods, and now you can create the realistic-looking shapes, textures and colors yourself. Classes aren't available in English, but you can still follow the steps if you don't speak Japanese. [www.ganso-sample.com/experience](http://www.ganso-sample.com/experience)







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# TOFU BEATS

## Just a newtown boy

BY PATRICK ST. MICHEL

**Y**usuke Kawai grew up just outside of Kobe in a “new town,” the Japanese term for a planned community. Kawai, who records music under the name tofubeats, describes his government-developed hometown: “There’s no city center and no local shopping streets like in other towns. Every station has similarly designed shopping malls, just with different names.” They were ideal residential zones, with big-city vice swapped out for big-box chains and department stores. Kawai recalls the only cultural center of any sort being a music shop, rental store Tsutaya and second-hand shop Hard-Off.

“The new town was made from nothing, and so we didn’t really have any traditional festivals. To me, it was vacant. The new town didn’t really have its own uniqueness in Japan.”

Yet this space helped develop Kawai’s creativity and shaped his approach to music. As a teenager, he spent most of his time absorbing the CDs available at Tsutaya and used any other free time to hunt down new sounds on the internet. “I tried to find anything interesting around me, but there were always only ordinary things. And so I started to think that I have to remix what I had to make something new.” Kawai spliced up mainstream J-pop sounds and YouTube discoveries into a fidgety style, which helped him connect with like-minded people on message boards.

“The new town taught me creativity by showing me how you can mix uniform things into something edgy.”

This approach has carried over to his work as tofubeats, a project wherein he gathers ideas from a wide array of sources—American hip-hop, Japanese idol pop, Chicago house—and blends them into something unique, a sound apt for both headphones and dancefloors. This has proven both popular with underground electronic music fans online and with a more mainstream audience, as tofubeats releases

music through a sub-label of Warner Music. He’s at the forefront of Japanese artists raised on the internet and thus exposed to everything. Creativity, for Kawai and others of his generation, involves sifting through it all and putting their own spin on it. And trying to push Japanese music in new directions.

“In my opinion, a lot of recent Japanese music has become creepily too nice, and so I think I want to listen to and make more music with rage from inside me.”

Initially, Kawai created dance music under the moniker dj newtown. He connected with online “netlabels” such as Maltine Records to share his creations, ranging from sliced-up reworks of anime songs to pitch-shifted electro-R&B featuring Kawai himself rapping through a layer of Auto-tune. His creations got more and more attention, landing him remix work with major J-pop artists and, eventually, the chance to

join a major label. Since, he has released two full-length albums and worked with a variety of pop acts, from ‘80s heavyweight Chisato Moritaka to contemporary singer Dream Ami. This position, though, has its challenges.

“Major labels are companies too, and so I have to be commercially appealing for them,” he says. “Otherwise, they don’t let me do more creative jobs, and don’t give me a budget for it.” Kawai admits that keeping tofubeats’ music populist helps keep his creativity sharp. Plus, he’s really good at putting together a hooky number that can work equally well coming out of a fan’s headphones or a TV commercial.

But even more impressive is Kawai’s ability to introduce new sounds to listeners. Alongside his radio-ready work, tofubeats’ albums feature more left-field songs, ranging from slow-burning







house cuts to a song like “Stakeholder,” which falls somewhere between experimental pop and club banger. “Maybe songs like ‘Stakeholder’ aren’t important for most Japanese people, but the lack of this kind of music from the Japanese major music scene means an audience like myself is deprived of the chance to listen to different varieties of music,” he says.

To that end, he’s continuing to try out a variety of sounds, not settling on just one reliable sound. His most recent work, uploaded first to YouTube and music site SoundCloud, is a hip-hop number called “Shoppingmall,” which finds Kawai rapping over a skittery beat and bleary-eyed synthesizer, his voice glazed in Auto-tune.

This alone isn’t a new development—he’s

been rapping over his music since he started out—but “Shoppingmall” dwells on something not heard often from J-pop: artistic angst and, at times, anger. The opening line goes “What’s real and what’s not?” and from there he questions art versus commerce (“I want to make a classic more than buy a new car”) and even rhymes about not wanting to really talk to anyone at the moment. Kawai says he doesn’t want to limit the listener’s imagination regarding the song but does say it is about “the order of things” in his life.

“Those songs are demo songs for my next album. Because the schedule for releasing it is unclear, I recorded the video and uploaded it online,” he says. “I also want to see how people, including the major label staff, react to those songs.”

Kawai believes 2017 will see a new tofubeats album (“or albums,” he adds with emphasis on the “s”), and he plans to reach more listeners outside of Japan. In the meantime, though, he has plenty of live shows coming up, and he’s always thinking up new songs. “Listening to music motivates me the most. It makes me feel the best and stimulates my creativity when I listen to great music while taking a walk,” he says. Beyond that, conversations with friends and other producers, along with reading books and magazines (and checking Japanese actor Fujii Mina’s Instagram account) helps get the creative juices flowing.

“Oh, I still go to Hard-Off often, and that always makes me feel creative too,” he says, a reminder that the new town spirit that shaped him carries on today. ☒





# PICK POCKY

## The history of the chocolate biscuit stick and its rivalry with the Korean rip-off

BY TREVOR CAMPBELL

**J**apan takes dessert very seriously. While it's easy to appreciate the craftsmanship in traditional handmade sweets like wagashi and mochi, the country's mass-produced goodies are just as commendable.

But among a sea of brightly-coloured, impeccably-packaged contenders, the heavy-weight champion of Japan's confectionery circuit is Pocky. Glico's chocolate-covered biscuit sticks are both classic and modern: they've been on shelves for fifty years but are constantly reimagined in an endless variety of flavors, including a recent "adult" addition that sees both its cookie stick and chocolate coating blended with whiskey.

Pocky has become so famous in Japan that in 1999 it was granted its own official day by the Japan Anniversary Association. And not just any old day, but November 11. The eleventh day of the eleventh month, a set of numbers which bear an uncanny resemblance to a row of a certain dessert stick you may recall.

Pocky Day is marked by events all over Japan at which sugar fiends can win prizes, snap selfies to help create an online photo mosaic and celebrate their love for all things Pocky-related. But at its core, Pocky Day is just a brilliant idea by Glico to sell as many boxes of Pocky as possible. The rather flimsy concept behind the

holiday and its "share happy" tagline are that customers should demonstrate their affection for one another by buying packs of Pocky for, well, everyone they care about. Depending on the size of your social circle, this might be a fairly pricey way to say "thank you for being a friend."

But while Pocky Day's sentiment is based on friendship, its origin story is surprisingly rife with theft, deceit and delicious revenge.

To get to the bottom of it, we need to go back to the beginning. First, there was Pretz, Ezaki Glico's savory predecessor to Pocky (and which remains as a successful snack in its own right). Three years later, Pretz was dipped in chocolate for a decadent twist. Pocky shot to popularity in Japan and Ezaki Glico raked in profits as their

arsenal of stick-shaped goodies enjoyed relatively unrivaled success.

Everything changed with the arrival of Pepero. In 1983, almost two decades after Pocky made its debut on Japanese shelves, South Korean manufacturer Lotte began selling a long, thin biscuit dipped in chocolate. Sound familiar?

It did to Glico. But since Pocky wasn't available for sale in Korea, its parent company wasn't able to successfully build a case against this bold appropriation. As a result, Pepero became a smash hit in South Korea while Pocky execs mourned the loss of a chunk of the Asian confectionary market.

But what happened next made Glico livid. The story goes that two Korean schoolgirls decided to make a wish on November 11, 1994. In the hopes of becoming tall and slender like a pair of number ones—or their favorite Korean snack food—they ate a handful of Pepero in a bid to invoke cosmic intervention.

We know what you're thinking: it seems unlikely that committing to eating a box of chocolate-covered cookies would be the fastest route to a slim silhouette. Whether the story was concocted by a boardroom full of marketing execs or actually originated with a sugar-centric diet pact, it caught on. Pepero Day officially launched in 1997 and in recent years has accounted for a staggering 50% of Lotte's annual profits.

Meanwhile, back in Japan, Glico watched in disbelief as a Pocky knock-off eclipsed its estranged foreign ancestor by an unimaginable sales margin. It may have been tempting to point a Pocky-shaped missile at the Lotte factory and do something drastic, but they resorted to a much more classical form of revenge: an eye for an eye. Lotte had stolen from them, so they would do it back.

Two years after Pepero Day took the Korean calendar by storm, Glico made an identical announcement in Japan: as of 1999 (or year 11, according to the Japanese calendar), November 11 would be henceforth known as Pocky Day.

And that was that. Over the past 17 years, each Pocky Day has been accompanied by new publicity stunts, including two that earned Glico the distinction of having broken two Guinness World Records: Most Mentions of a Brand on Twitter in 2013 and the incredibly specific Largest Online Photo Collage of Cookies/Biscuits (one has to wonder just how many competitors vie for a niche title such as that).

If you keep a level head and remember that buying Pocky doesn't have a direct effect on your relationships or your odds of achieving a stick-figure physique (or does it?), Pocky Day can be a fun excuse to stuff your gob full of sweets. A nationally-mandated snack break? Now that's something to celebrate. 🍪







## ANDAZ TOKYO Christmas Sweets

**D**ecadent, melt-in-the-mouth dark chocolate. White cream as smooth and light as snow. Fragrant chestnuts, sweet honey, the ambrosia-like taste of figs soaked in wine.

During the holiday season, food becomes a social gathering point, the foundation of celebrations, the symbol and reward for a year's worth of hard work. And there is perhaps no reward as classic or sweet as that of—sweets. Andaz Tokyo understands this.

That's why this year's unique lineup of Pastry Shop Christmas sweets is both playful and classic, sumptuous and familiar. The collection was



designed by decorated pastry chef Masaki Okazaki, who won the 2012 Le Mondial des Art Sucrés in Paris.

Andaz's Christmas offerings include Okazaki's signature éclairs in new flavors, including orange mascarpone, Christmas pudding, Gluhwein Tanba black bean, white chocolate raisin, and strawberry. As an elegant touch to any gathering or even simple family dinner, a larger éclair cake is also available in strawberry or Tanba black bean.



The Christmas cake collection includes a vibrant apricot cake, in which the sweet summer flavor of

this stone fruit is toned with white chocolate and hazelnut mousse.

The familiar Mont Blanc dome pairs sweet chestnut cream with an enticingly tart touch contributed by the cassis gelée.

Okazaki has also dreamt up a true voyage for the senses in a decadent cheesecake with flavors wafting from the Mediterranean. It combines gorgonzola, acacia honey and dried figs, all of which have been soaked for three days in port wine; it begs to be paired with drinks from the grape. Talk about a wine-dark sea(son).

Christmas lollipops and hampers stuffed with yuzu guimauve, cookies, almond-chocolate strawberries and other staples of the Christmas hearth are also available from the Pastry Shop.

Whatever your holiday plans, Andaz Tokyo's Pastry Shop selection is sure to tantalize your taste buds whilst everything on the menu goes well with friends of good cheer. **Pastry Shop, 1F, Andaz Tokyo Toranomon Hills, 1-23-4, Toranomon, Minato-ku. 8am-8pm. Tel: 03-6830-7765. andaztokyodining.com**

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# BEHIND THE CURTAIN

How the Tokyo International Players play the theater game

BY ANGELA QIAN

According to Saya Suetsugu, the Tokyo International Players originally started as a hobby for bored expat housewives. “They had the money to spend and there wasn’t anything else that they wanted to do but to be involved in doing arts,” she says. That was 120 years ago. Since then, the Tokyo International Players has expanded and evolved into one of the most recognizable English-language theater organizations in the Tokyo arts community.

Suetsugu is the current president of the TIP board. Talking to her and to several other members of the TIP community, I got the impression of a wide web of the various players that make TIP possible—the actors, writers, backstage managers, costume designers, front-of-house volunteers and publicists. Most of all, the picture drawn for me was one of intense energy: of unrelenting activity from these people whose lives revolve around their devotion to theater and the creative arts.

## RENAISSANCE MEN & WOMEN

It’s hard to find a single TIP member without a dozen other interests. For instance, Brian Berdanier, vice president of the board of directors, comes from a background in classical voice, linguistics, acting and literature. His day job is teaching at an international high school, and as the TIP literary manager, he is usually reading half a dozen scripts at any given time. “He’s a dramaturg, director, actor, French teacher...” Kimie Mizuno, director of the next Main Stage production *Speaking in Tongues*, says admiringly.

Jack Merluzzi, TIP’s technical adviser, worked in radio for seventeen years and handles sound mixing and lights for TIP. He’s also employed as a character voice artist. Sara Ben-Abdullah, the TIP costumer, has also worked in glassworking, woodworking, and welding. “I love making stuff with my hands,” she tells me; “I made all my furniture in university.”

Rodger Sono works at the Asahi Shinbun by day; by night, he’s an actor and videographer active in the Tokyo International Players and at least three other theater groups, as well as two improv comedy groups. He even writes his own plays and draws comics. I am told by another TIP member that Rodger is an accomplished cook and baker, and leads group hikes to forage for and cook wild ingredients. I interviewed him on a Friday; when I asked when he’d last slept, he said, “Tuesday.” It’s a joke—I think.

## HEAVENLY SPHERES (OF INFLUENCE)

Though each TIP member I spoke with mentioned how inspiring the other members are, each member also has their own particularly beloved artists. “More than theater, I think I’m more inspired by art,” Mizuno says, citing Yayoi Kusama and Yoko Ono. She also talks about her mother,

Yashi Mizuno, a full-time Australian artist who had done exhibitions in Indonesia and America. “I think seeing that, I was like, oh it’s cool, you can be an artist. You’re not a deadbeat, you’re trying to do art,” Mizuno says.

TIP also bleeds into several other theater projects around Tokyo, such as the Black Stripes Theater or the Tokyo Artisans Theatre Ensemble. Suetsugu, Sono, and several other TIP players will be involved this year with the Tokyo Theatre for Children, which puts on playful performances that introduce young children to the creative field. TIP interests have also intertwined with other professional and personal opportunities; Sono tells me about Impro5, an English improv team which takes on a Japanese improv team in workshops that teach English to companies such as Dentsu. Ben-Abdullah runs her own online boutique, Kinu Outfitters, which sells custom-made items created from vintage kimonos. She also describes how she met her now-husband after designing his costume for the role “torture victim man”—a very romantic first encounter, she says dryly.



© Rodger Sono

## POST-SHOW BLUES

The amount of work that goes into TIP is immense; a director may start planning for a show years in advance, and once it’s approved, it’s a marathon lasting as long as six months. “People are like, ‘Oh, you’re

a community theater group, it’s just amateur drama,’” Suetsugu says, “and then they come to the show and they’re like, ‘Oh, I was not expecting it to be that good.’”

This dedication easily lends itself to significant, even symbolic memories. Merluzzi describes a moment in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* when everything builds to a huge entrance—the lights falling to reveal Dr. Frank N. Furter in silhouette, wearing 4-inch heels and a wing-like cape. “The audience paused for a half second to take it all in and then burst into applause... for over forty seconds!” he says. Ben-Abdullah describes the same moment. She was backstage, and hearing the applause was so moving that she cried.

The high of putting a production into play can be intense. “You don’t really realize until after the show is finished,” Sono tells me, “but then after the show is finished and everyone is like *otsukaresama* and there’s a lull...and then you get off at the station for rehearsal [again.]”

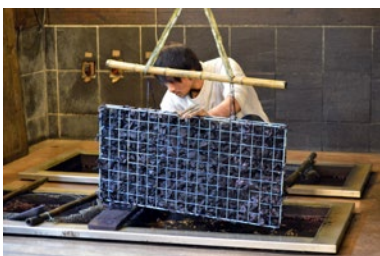
Mizuno has her own phrase for this: the post-show blues. “It’s very stressful, a lot of hard work, there are constantly things going wrong, but that’s the beauty of theater.” ☒





## DISCOVERING TAMA

The **Tama area** remains one of Tokyo's best-kept secrets. For many, the enticing Sanrio Puroland theme park is as far as they'll get. But little do they know that



the Tama area sprawls deep into the Kanagawa Mountains. The Tama River—calm and idyllic at times, and a torrent of waterfalls at others—splits the lush ranges. Here, you can forget the city and lose yourself in deep forests and vast underground limestone caverns.

All this is only a train ride away from central Tokyo. If you take the JR Chuo line all the way west, you'll find yourself at the Okutama foothills in just over an hour and a half. After stepping off the train, you'll know from your first breaths of crisp mountain air that the city is far behind you and that adventure awaits.

The culturally inclined might begin with the eastern Ome area. It boasts a prestigious history in textiles, with the **Kosoen Dyeing Studio** offering a hands-on traditional *shibori-zome* (handmade indigo dyeing technique) experience. Although this art takes decades of practice and generations of expertise to master, even as a complete beginner you will walk away with an elegant design of your own.

When your stomach starts to growl, head to the picturesque **Canyons and Okutama Cafe Awa** in the Okutama Mountains. Have a barbecue meal while overlooking the Tama River. From the café you can also take part in river experiences, ranging from peaceful pack rafting through gentle waters, to canyoning down the region's waterfalls.

However you spend the day, your evening is best begun with a trip to one of the area's onsen. **Moegi no Yu** onsen heats water that comes fresh from the mountain, and is sure to soak away your tensions as you relax nestled in the mountains. End the day with a locally-brewed craft beer at the nearby **Beer Cafe Vertere** while looking out at the stars rarely visible in the city.

But why stop at a day? The oasis of nature in the heart of the Tama area is only a stone's throw from the city, with so much more to be explored.

**Kosoen Dyeing Studio**  
[www.kosoen.com](http://www.kosoen.com)

**Moegi no Yu**  
[www.okutamas.co.jp/moegi](http://www.okutamas.co.jp/moegi)

**Canyons and Okutama Cafe Awa**  
[canyons.jp/en/areas/okutama/canyons-okutama](http://canyons.jp/en/areas/okutama/canyons-okutama)

**Beer Cafe Vertere**  
[verterebrew.com/english](http://verterebrew.com/english)

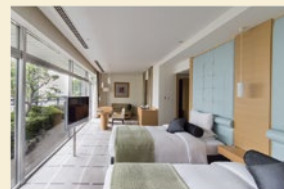
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T O K Y O



# 'TIS THE SEASON

The month of December is a month for celebrations. As 2016 draws to an end, it's nice to reflect on the year gone by in the company of friends and family. Nothing brings people together more than food and drinks, and our holiday dining and entertainment guide is sure to point you in the right direction.



## CAFE LA VIDA

♥ Hiroo

Music takes center stage at Cafe La Vida, where you can enjoy state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems while you drink and dine. The music at Cafe La Vida is typically Latin, and tends to lean towards a Cuban sound. Warm up your Christmas this year with a Caribbean touch—Cuban music, Cuban cuisine, and of course, Mojitos. Cafe La Vida has special Christmas dinner courses starting from ¥3,800.

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[www.cafelavida.tokyo](http://www.cafelavida.tokyo)



## CHEZ TAKA

♥ Higashi Azabu

Takayoshi Kawai, the eponymous owner and head chef of Chez Taka, has an impressive track record. He has worked in a host of Michelin-starred restaurants in Europe and North America, perfecting his signature French cuisine. Enjoy wholesome farm-to-table cooking at Chez Taka this holiday season, with a special Christmas menu priced at ¥10,000. Or drop by to try the special new year menu, which is ¥6,500 for lunch or ¥7,500 for dinner.

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1-20-3 Higashi Azabu, Minato-ku. Tel: 03-5797-7687. Lunch: 11:30am-1:30pm (last call), Dinner: 5:30pm-9pm (last call). 📠 Akabanebashi. Email: [info@cheztaka.jp](mailto:info@cheztaka.jp). [www.cheztaka.jp](http://www.cheztaka.jp)



## CHILES MEXICAN GRILL

♥ Harajuku

Come and feel the joy of Christmas at Chiles Mexican Grill. Enjoy Chiles' Christmas menu, featuring appetizers, roast turkey plate with mashed potatoes and special stuffing, Mexican ceviche, Christmas salad and Chiles' traditional homemade cheese flan. On Christmas Day, receive Chiles' famous once-a-year Christmas apple salad for free with any food purchase. The Christmas dinner course is available for ¥4,850, between Dec 22-24. Reservations are essential. Complimentary glass of sparkling wine (cava) per person with each reservation.

1-8-24 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku. Tel: 03-6434-9693. Mon 11am-4pm, Tue-Fri 11am-9pm, Sat 11am-10pm, Sun 11am-8pm. 📠 Harajuku. [www.chiles-grill.com](http://www.chiles-grill.com)



## COYOTE UGLY TOKYO

♥ Roppongi

Coyote Ugly Saloon, the infamous chain of bars from New York, will open a new franchise in Roppongi this December. You've probably seen the film, or have heard the legend. It's all true. Skimpily clad bartenders really do dance and sing on top of the bar, and they really do challenge patrons to drinking games. This means one thing: it's the perfect place for boisterous Christmas parties. This holiday season, Coyote Ugly Saloon will host special Christmas events December 22-25, as well as a countdown event on New Year's Eve. For more information on events, visit their website.

8・9F Roppongi Plaza bldg, 3-12-6 Roppongi, Minato-ku. Tel: 03-6432-9858. Mon-Sat 7pm-5am. 📠 Roppongi. Email: [coyoteuglysaloon@banc.jp](mailto:coyoteuglysaloon@banc.jp). [www.coyoteuglysaloon.jp](http://www.coyoteuglysaloon.jp)





## CRISP SALAD WORKS

♥ Various

Crisp Salad Works is a pioneer in Tokyo for the fast, casual, custom-chopped style of salad bars that are popular in the States. The menu of salads, grains, and lemonade (with free refills!) goes above and beyond health-conscious vegan and gluten-free fare, aiming to satisfy anybody who wants to eat well while eating right. The chicken and ham are cooked in-store daily without preservatives, and the dressings are house-made every day. Come grab a table or get a salad to go. English-speaking staff available.

### AZABU-JÜBAN

1-10-10 Mita, Minato-ku. Tel: 03-6435-4386. Open daily 11am-10pm. 🚶 Azabu-Jūban.

### EBISU

3-29-16 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku. Tel: 03-6721-6725. Open daily 11am-10pm. 🚶 Ebisu.

### ROPPONGI HILLS

1F Hillside, Roppongi Hills, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku. Tel: 03-6721-1162. Open daily 11am-10pm. 🚶 Roppongi. Email: voice@crisp.co.jp. www.crisp.co.jp



## DIA TOKYO

♥ Roppongi

It's the holiday season. 'Tis the season for celebrations and lavish meals. And if you're concerned about all the extra calories you'll be ingesting this month, why not dance it off in style at Roppongi's newest night club, DiA. DiA is a classy three-storey club, and it opens Dec 2. Expect to see world-class DJs and dancers from famed dance troupe Burlesque Tokyo. There will be a special Christmas event from Dec22-25, and a countdown party on Dec 31.

Mention *Metropolis* for a special discounted entry price: ¥3,000 with 2 drinks for men, ¥1,000 with 2 drinks for women.

1-3F Roppongi Nittaku bldg, 3-8-15 Roppongi, Minato-ku. Tel: 03-6447-4416. 1F: 6:30pm-Late, 2F: 9pm-Late, 3F: 10pm-Late. 🚶 Roppongi. Email: info@diatokyo.com. www.diatokyo.com



## GOOD BARBEQUE AMERICAN CRAFT SMOKE

♥ Nakameguro

If authentic American barbecue is something you are craving this holiday season, look no further. The good people at Good Barbeque American Craft Smoke has your back. "Craft" is something taken seriously here, and they smoke and marinate all their meats in-house. As well as a wide selection of smoked meats, they also serve tasty craft beers from local and international microbreweries. Good Barbeque is now taking bookings for end-of-year parties, with deals starting from ¥2,700. Pay an additional ¥2,052 and get all-you-can-drink craft beer. What more can you ask for?

1-22-12 Nakameguro, Meguro-ku. Tel: 03-6303-3575. 11am-2am (Sundays and public holidays till 11:30pm). 🚶 Nakameguro.

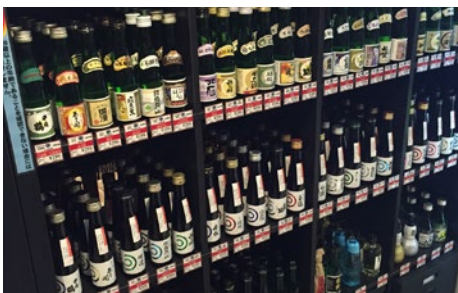


## GUZMAN Y GOMEZ

♥ Roppongi

Guzman y Gomez, the premium fast-food outlet from Australia, is opening a new branch in Roppongi on Dec 12. Guzman y Gomez serves up healthy Mexican food using fresh ingredients, and is particularly known for its mouth-watering burritos. Guzman y Gomez will be hosting a special Free Burrito Day for anyone visiting the Roppongi branch on their opening day. All you have to do to receive a free burrito or a burrito bowl is to visit the branch on Dec 12.

2F Roppongi Grand Tower bldg, 3-2-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku. 11am-9pm. 🚶 Roppongi. www.guzmanygomez.com



## ICHIGOU & TOKYO

♥ Kamata

If you're looking to stock up on sake this holiday season, make sure you stop by Ichigou in Kamata. Ichigou is the only sake store in Japan that specializes in 180ml bottles of the good stuff—which is the perfect size for a souvenir or to bring to a house party. And for people interested in sampling different types of sake, Ichigou has a great deal on six packs during the month of December. For ¥2,000 (+tax), you get to pick six bottles out of a selection of 45 different sakes. Spend over ¥1,000 and receive a free san shaku masu—a traditional Japanese vessel used to drink sake.

5-20-5 Kamata, Ota-ku. Tel: 03-3731-0604. Open 24 hours. 🚶 Kamata. Email: capsule.kamata@citta-rex.co.jp.



## THE APOLLO

♥ Yurakucho

Experience modern Greek dining at The Apollo this holiday season. Try their Christmas menu, available Dec 19-25, which features signature dishes such as saganaki cheese and charcoal grilled spare ribs. The Apollo is an award-winning modern Greek restaurant from Sydney, Australia. Inspired by the flavors of the Mediterranean, The Apollo focuses on key ingredients—olive oil, fresh seafood, fresh vegetables and dishes cooked over a wood fire. Celebrate the holiday season with friends, family or work colleagues at The Apollo, and enjoy modern Greek cuisine.

5-2-1 Ginza, Chuo-ku. Tel: 03-6264-5220. 🚶 Yurakucho. Email: theapolloreception@gmail.com. www.theapollo.jp





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	3 PM ~ 4 PM	<b>LECTURE</b> (45 min/Q&A 15 min)
2 SESSION	3 PM ~ 4 PM	<b>LECTURE</b> (45 min/Q&A 15 min)
	4 PM ~ 5 PM	<b>CONSULTATION</b> by 7 legal and business professionals

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# MAKE FOR THE MARKET

The best places to catch the holiday spirit

BY JOAN BAILEY



Photo by Cotaro70s under Creative Commons

**A**s cold winds blow and sunlight lends a sparkle to the snow on Mount Fuji's shoulders, things are starting to feel festive around the region. There is no shortage of things to do to celebrate the holiday season in Tokyo, so we've put together a list of a few favorites. Head on out and put some holiday pep in your step!

## YOKOHAMA'S RED BRICK WAREHOUSE CHRISTMAS MARKET

This German-style market takes place in the cobblestone plaza at historic Akarenga (Red Brick) Warehouse. A giant Christmas tree welcomes visitors to wander between the German-style Hütten (huts). They'll be selling traditional Christmas fare including the German Christmas cake Stollen, hot Glühwein (mulled wine) and freshly grilled sausages. Keep an eye out for the wooden dolls from the Erzgebirge Region of Germany, famous for its finely crafted wooden toys, ornaments and figurines (including nutcrackers!) since the 1700s. An ice-skating rink is right next door.

**Sat, Nov 26 through Sun, Dec 25. Open: 11am to 10pm (Tree Lighting 4pm to 10pm)** 🚶 Bashamichi or Sakuragicho. [bit.ly/2g1UDAL](http://bit.ly/2g1UDAL)

## SEKINO BOROICHI MARKET

Established in 1751, this market harkens back to a time when this area of western Tokyo

was all farms feeding a growing city of Edo. Sekino Boroichi is a giant winter flea market where roughly 300 vendors selling everything from steaming cups of amazake to antique kimono can be found. Just outside the north exit of the station, this popular annual event attracts roughly 80,000 people over two days. It promises a fun and adventurous search for gifts. (If this one doesn't fit to your calendar, then Boroichi Market II starts later in December and runs into January 2017. See the website for details.) **Fri, Dec 9 and Sat, Dec 10. Open 9am–10pm.** 🚶 Musashiseki. [bit.ly/2foVw2H](http://bit.ly/2foVw2H)

## CHRISTMAS MARKET AT INSTITUT FRANCAIS

Tucked along a small road not far from Iidabashi Station, Institut François is a hidden gem. Started over sixty years ago in order to further cultural exchange, the Institut brings a taste of French art, literature and music to Japan. It is no surprise then that it hosts a lively Christmas Market featuring all the ingredients for a holiday with that je ne sais quoi: champagne, wine, fresh produce and even a present or two for those near and dear. **Sat, Dec 10. Open 11am – 6pm.** 🚶 Iidabashi. [www.institutfrancais.jp/tokyo/fr](http://www.institutfrancais.jp/tokyo/fr)

## KASUKABE HAGOITA MARKET

Venture a bit out of town to discover the home of a unique traditional Japanese craft form.

Hagoita are paddle-like objects used in a traditional badminton-like game of Hanetsuki played during the New Year. Hanetsuki became popular roughly 700 years ago during the Muromachi Period, but crafty Edokko (citizens of Edo) turned them into art. Decorated with portraits of famous kabuki actors, the hagoita are three-dimensional sculptures using silk, cotton, beads and paint. If Saitama seems a bit far, then perhaps visit Senso-ji's Hagoita-Ichi Festival where many of the Kasukabe Hagoita are also sold. See the website for details. **Dec 21 through 23. Open: 10am to 7pm.** 🚶 Kasukabe (Saitama). [www.kasukabe-cci.or.jp/hagoitamatsuri/index.htm](http://www.kasukabe-cci.or.jp/hagoitamatsuri/index.htm)

## ROPPONGI HILLS CHRISTMAS MARKET

Celebrating ten years of spreading good cheer and offering the best gift selection for both the naughty and nice, the Roppongi Hills Christmas Market is full of good holiday fun for everyone. Modeled after the Stuttgart Christmas Market, one of the world's most famous and oldest Christmas markets, 111 vendors will settle themselves under the lights and decorations decking Oyane Plaza. Sip and snack along the rows of vendors in search of that perfect gift or just to enjoy a festive atmosphere in anticipation of the holiday season. **Sat, Nov 26 through Sun, Dec 25. 11am – 9pm. Oyane Plaza.** 🚶 Roppongi. [bit.ly/2f76xFp](http://bit.ly/2f76xFp)



# OASIS IN THE SKY

The allamanda flower is not only glorified in floral arrangements, but is also used for its health benefits. Just like the flower, the exclusive Allamanda Spa and Hotel in Aoyama is both beautiful and bountiful with health benefits. Right next to Gaienmae Station, this is a conveniently located portal to escape.

Up on the 11th floor, a 25-metre pool sprawls under a slanted roof with skylights. Beams of sunlight pierce through the water as you swim laps. On rainy days, it'll just feel all the cozier swimming in the 30.5-degree pool. Take private lessons, group training or just swim laps at your own leisure. When you need a rest, head to the loungers in the sun-drenched corner next to the bubbling jacuzzi that overlooks the Tokyo streets below.

The gym is equipped with state-of-the-art machines to help you get as fit, strong and toned as you're aiming for. Attentive staff will help you use the equipment, and can also set you programs with their personal training sessions. A sleek floor-board studio is used for group lessons, free for members. Dabble in ballet, gymnastics and aerobics exercises. Challenging yourself with something new is proven to stimulate creativity, and improve your physical state and emotional strength.

As a club member, you can use the pool, gym, and bathhouse facilities for just ¥1,000 a visit. Visitors without a membership will pay ¥4,000. After the initial registration fee, membership is paid monthly. There are numerous perks, including a 30% discount off the hotel rooms—50% if you feel spontaneous and book



There are two spas (one cold and one hot) as well as a large dry wood sauna and a steam sauna. Saunas help relieve tired muscles and flush toxins from your body.

When your stomach rumbles, head to the 8th floor. Newly opened 海舟 (Kaishu) is a chic and classy izakaya serving Japanese cuisine at reasonable prices. Sit at the sushi bar and watch as the chef prepares and serves you individual nigiri right before your eyes. This is one for the seafood lovers, with premium otoro tuna belly on offer, as well as tokishirazu salmon, sea urchin and eel. Next door, Portofino offers all-day menu options, where you could dine on eggs benedict for breakfast, ratatouille with fresh salad for lunch, and a juicy angus beef steak for dinner. There are plenty of healthy options and fresh drinks including an excellent carrot juice, all overlooking a view of the Chichibunomiya Rugby Pitch. On game day, it's the best seat there is.

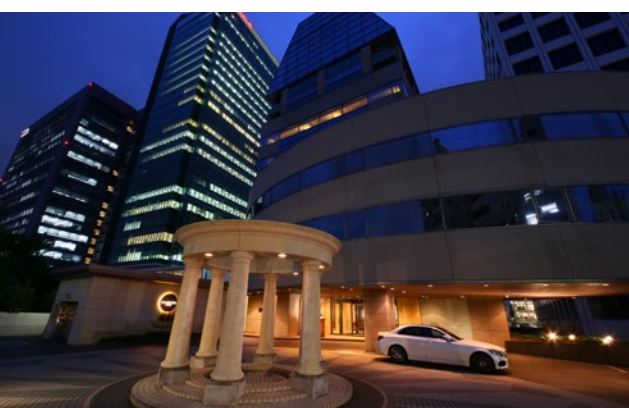
You'll descend to street level feeling rejuvenated and ready to face whatever is next on your agenda. Even if you just intend to make it a day visit, you'll be tempted to come back for more.

**A free trial and tour of facilities is available.**  
**Allamanda Spa Aoyama Club at Hotel Allamanda Aoyama. 2-7-13 Kita Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo. Tel: 03-6455-5512, open 9am-5pm daily (except Sat, Sun & holidays). Spa open 6:30am-10pm daily (including public holidays).**  
 ☞ [Gaenmae.allamanda-spa-aoyama.jp](http://Gaenmae.allamanda-spa-aoyama.jp)

on the night of stay. The rooms range from royal suites, with huge living areas and tasteful artworks, to stylish modern rooms, if that's more to your taste.

Other luxury services available at the Allamanda Spa include massage, acupuncture and facial treatments. Prices depend on the type of treatment and the length of the session, ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Indulge while you give yourself to someone else's capable hands.

Whether you choose to be pampered or have an intense gym session, you'll love unwinding in the bathhouse. Both the male and female wings have a bathhouse attached to their relaxation and powder rooms. The superior facilities include marble finishes and plenty of ornate hooks. The washing area is spacious and stocked with soaps and shampoos.







## DECEMBER NEWS

**T**he medals for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will be made out of recycled metals from discarded or obsolete electronic devices.

It's part of a commitment to make the Games sustainable in all aspects of planning and execution. Spokesperson Hikariko Ono said, "We believe this initiative will contribute to a sustainable Tokyo 2020 Games, and we are looking forward to the active engagement of partner organisations and the general public to help make it a success."

The Hara Model Railway Museum in Yokohama is hosting Thomas the Tank Engine, along with Percy and all the rest, for a Christmas train extravaganza. Thomas and crew will be chugging along the museum's diorama—the largest one in the world—while on the main floor a huge Christmas tree will be decorated entirely with Thomas ornaments. The **Thomas the Tank Engine Winter Gallery** will be on November 23 through December 31, but is closed on Tuesdays. [www.hara-mrm.com](http://www.hara-mrm.com)

The training of **guide dogs** will be improved after it was found that one in five blind people accompanied by guide dogs in Japan have

accidentally stepped off a train station platform. This was found from a large-scale survey by the National Federation of All Japan Guide Dog Training Institutions. 21 percent of the 540 participants said that they have gotten stuck in the gap between the platform and the train, or lost their footing. The causes of such accidents will be investigated further.

Hibiya Park will host a food-filled and fun educational event where the focus is on teaching children (and maybe even some adults) where their food comes from and how it is grown. There will be games, short seminars, cute animals to pet, food to buy, and of course, snacks straight from the farm! On during the weekend of December 10-11; find out more about the peculiarly-named **Farmers and Kids Festa** at [farmerskids.jp](http://farmerskids.jp).

Wine lovers are planning their way to Hollywood Plaza in Roppongi Hills for the annual **Yamanashi Wineries Fair**. Some of Japan's best vineyards will be present at this two-day gathering on December 16-17. Twenty-two wineries will be ready and waiting on the fifth floor with samples and workshops galore to educate the palette on flavor and pairings in two-hour sessions. Go after work on Friday 7:30-9:30pm, or on Saturday 1-3pm or 4-6pm. Buy advance tickets at [www.ywf.jp](http://www.ywf.jp).


The first annual comprehensive urban arts

festival, **Tokyo Metropolitan Festival**, brings together a collection of international and Japanese artists for a feast of art of all types and styles. The festival includes plays, dance, open-air performances and concerts, including a group from the Toshima International City of Arts and Culture Program. On until December 18; find out more at [www.tokyo-metropolitan-festival.jp/en](http://www.tokyo-metropolitan-festival.jp/en).

After the third fatal car accident in Japan caused by drivers playing **Pokémon Go**, the game has been disabled when at driving speed. Niantic Inc., the company behind Pokémon Go, have adjusted the game so players won't be able to spin Pokéstops or see Pokémon appearing when the smartphone senses it is moving at a certain speed. This took effect following pressure by local government and police in central Japan after the death of a 9-year-old-boy in Aichi Prefecture in late October.

The **Saitama Triennale**, running since September 24, will come to an end on December 11. This was the first annual international art festival around Urawa. The theme, "Envisioning the Future," offers interactive experiences around various installations, video projects, plays and dance. Local artists and art supporters are encouraged to participate by organizing their own events as part of this larger one for an ever-growing creative endeavor. [saitamatriennale.jp/en](http://saitamatriennale.jp/en)





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## TOKYO UNION CHURCH CHRISTMAS 2016

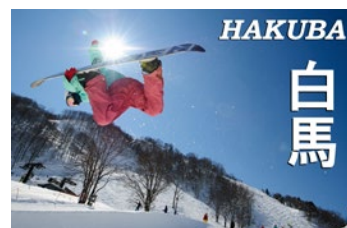
4 Dec. 8:30AM Worship with Holy Communion, 11:00AM Worship • 11 Dec. 8:30AM Worship w/Holy Communion, 11:00AM Worship, 4:00PM Tokyo Embassy Choir Christmas Family concert • 14 Dec 7:30PM Blue Christmas Service • 18 Dec. 8:30AM Worship w/ Holy Communion, 11:00AM Worship • 24 Dec. Christmas Eve: 4:00 PM Family Christmas Service, 6:00PM Service of Lessons and Carols, 8:00PM Service of Lessons and Carols w/ Holy Communion • 25 Dec. CHRISTMAS DAY: 8:30AM Worship w/Holy Communion, 11:00AM Worship • 1 Jan. 11:00AM Worship w/Holy Communion **5-7-7 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku. Omotesando. Tel: 03-3400-0047 www.tokyounion.org**



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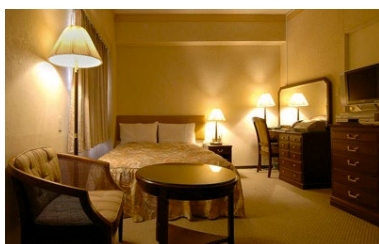
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## BDC PILATES

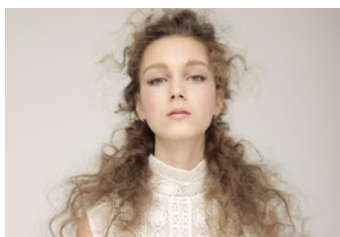
BDC Pilates in the Omotesando/Minami-Aoyama area is the first studio in Japan to focus on Group Reformer classes. BDC Pilates is run by Broadway Dance Center, an institution that has trained professional dancers for 30 years. Each class has a limit of six people, allowing participants to receive full attention from the instructor. English reformer classes are available. Private sessions also offered in English. For a limited time, BDC is waiving its ¥10,000 membership fee. Trial lesson for ¥2,000 (ex tax). Located a 30-second walk from Omotesando Station. **5F 5-6-24 Minami-Aoyama Minato-ku.** 〓 Omotesando. Email: [info@bdcpilates.com](mailto:info@bdcpilates.com) (English OK). [bdcpilates.com](http://bdcpilates.com)



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## MORIO FROM LONDON

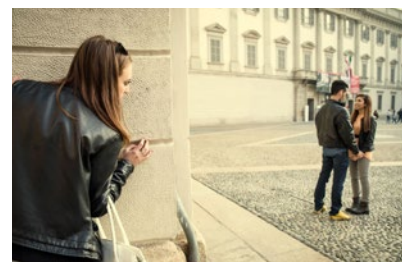
Psst! *Metropolis* readers receive 30% off all menu options on first visit! Morio From London is a hair salon that is loved by locals and visitors alike, smack-bang in the middle of Harajuku. The highly-skilled staff have trained in London and Paris, and the owner is a world-class stylist. They are renowned for their excellent skills in highlights and color. Get the look you're going for with E/J bilingual staff who are attentive and familiar with foreigner hair. On weekdays there is no need for a reservation, so come whenever you're hanging out in Harajuku! **2F Green Fantasia Bldg., 1-11-11, Jingumae, Shibuya-ku.** 〓 Meiji-jingumae. Tel: **03-3408-5160**. Mon & Wed-Sat, 11am-9pm; Sun & hols 10am-8pm. Instagram: [morio\\_harajuku](https://www.instagram.com/morio_harajuku). [moriofromlondon.com](http://moriofromlondon.com)



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## BEAUTY BY ALEXANDRE

Alexandre started as a hairstylist and color specialist for blondes and brunettes in Paris 25 years ago. He moved to New York, and worked in Manhattan for more than 10 years at an upscale hair salon. For many years, he worked in the fashion industry for movies and TV (*VH1: Behind the Music*, *CBS News*, etc.), fashion shows (Lanvin, Nautica, etc.) and photography (*Vanity Fair*, *Teen People*, etc.), moving between Paris and New York, and now, Tokyo. He also specializes in make-up and body painting, and can provide make-up workshops for small groups at private homes. Alexandre understands that sometimes, people are unable to visit salons for cuts and styling, and so he is happy to make house-calls. By appointment only at home or at Lizero in Omotesando. Tel: **090-3520-6262**. [www.bba-japan.com](http://www.bba-japan.com)



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## THE GRINBERG METHOD

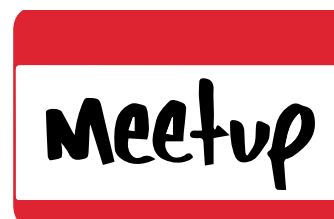
The Grinberg Method is a new type of holistic therapy that remedies muscle pain through touch, to recognize and stop behaviors that result in the pain. The therapy is a combination of breathing instructions, movement, deep-tissue massage, oil treatments, and stretches. The Method additionally heals deep emotional wounds, and is especially useful against migraines, neck and shoulder stiffness, lower-back pain, constipation, stress, anxiety, depression, and insomnia. There are fun monthly movement workshops available to help you learn to self-treat pain, muscle stiffness, and stress. **Special offer: First meeting (120m) for only ¥7,000, same as 1h weekly session. Reservations only. Tel: 080-2373-0773. Mon.Tue.Thu.Sat. 11am~6pm. Higashi Nakano, Tokyo. Email: [ckaren9@yahoo.com](mailto:ckaren9@yahoo.com). [www.grinbergmethod.com](http://www.grinbergmethod.com)**



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## TOKYO MEETUP

The Tokyo Spontaneous Hangout Meetup has over 30 events every month: international parties, dinner parties, speed-friending with games, picnics, night picnics, live English/Japanese comedy, language exchange, and many more, where foreigners and Japanese come together to make friends and together enjoy what's on offer. We make a concerted effort to provide a variety of events every week in addition to the events that repeat weekly. If one week's events aren't your cup of tea, the next week's events might be. Why not join us? [www.meetup.com/tokyospontaneous](http://www.meetup.com/tokyospontaneous)



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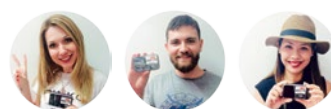
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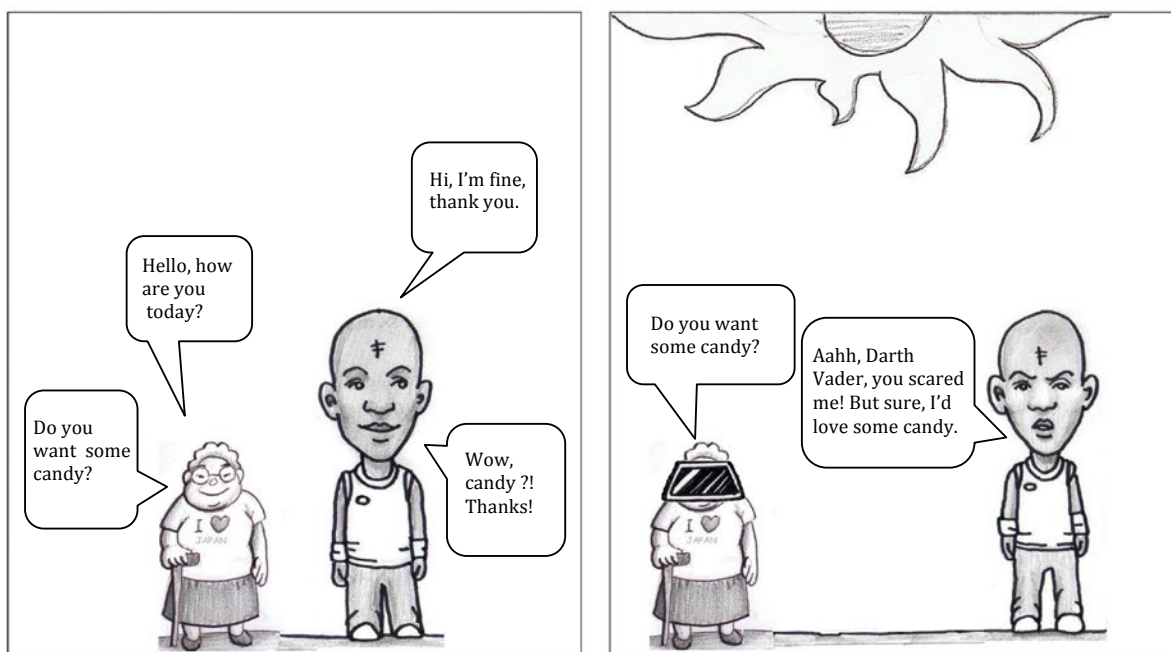
*No Champagne, No Party!*





## OBA-CHAN VADER

BY HUGH GRAY




## HOROSCOPE

BY CATHRYN MOE

♥ Love ♣ Money ♠ Luck


### ARIES

Mar 21-Apr 20 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

 Your stellar chart shows you may not have much time for yourself. If it's invading your space, December has a plan. You're so busy you won't have to hesitate. Self-reflection is not a requirement. This is a freedom you deserve! It's a break from being stuck in winter puddles or from constant distractions thrown your way. Enjoy the holiday run-up to New Year's Eve—you're almost there!


### TAURUS

Apr 21-May 21 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣

 Feeling clobbered as Uranus pounces on Ceres in your solar twelfth house? Translation: sudden changes just when you're settling in. Somehow December has a way of making that not seem so bad. After all, this is the "silly season" for progress. Take time out to remember the warmth and sentimental dreams that got you into this in the first place. New Year's Eve is telling.


### GEMINI

May 22-Jun 21 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 Mercury, the messenger, opposes your sign. That is, until it transits to your solar eighth house! Then, you can expect December to bring all kinds of gifts and baubles. Is it because it's "just that time of year?" Actually, it's your stellar self, integrating into a starry alignment. If you have built something with a loved one or an organization, you'll be recognized. Enjoy your New Year's Eve!


### CANCER

Jun 22-Jul 23 ♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 As the heavyweights align their star power and December rushes in, you're in a position to negotiate. Sure, it may look like someone else has the answers—or all the breaks. But in reality, you're the balance. So check in with your feelings to make sure it's what you really want to do. You're in a position of choice. Then get ready for a New Year's Eve that knocks your socks off!


### LEO

Jul 24-Aug 23 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

 There's only so much you can do. Then it's time to shine like a holiday star! December begins with a bit of creativity and a nibble of romance. This can become a full-fledged intrigue if you're in the mood! For Leos who already have enough on their plate, there are plenty of festivities for you or the kids (who might just behave like little angels). Enjoy New Year's Eve to the fullest.


### VIRGO

Aug 24-Sep 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 December has a tendency to start out like a cookie crumb trail, then turn into a mug of hot chocolate with a homemade marshmallow, to boot! Whatever your plans are in the beginning, they're going to have a mind of their own, as they reveal their inner workings. You may need a cuddle in the midst of it. Go ahead—make the first move. What do you have to lose?


### LIBRA

Sep 24-Oct 23 ♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 December won't call for you to spend all your time being busy. You may enjoy the comfort of home, connecting with loved ones and family you haven't seen. Communications are all over the place, almost out of bounds, with an excitement that's irresistible. Holiday traditions may suddenly seem more attractive as the New Year approaches. Take a well-deserved break!


### SCORPIO

Oct 24-Nov 22 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣

 You won't have to go looking for holiday mysteries—they will come to you! Dark Moon Lilith in Scorpio insists you expand your creative mind as she sees prosperity in your future! The excitement of the financial ups and downs early in December stabilizes as the weeks continue. Luckily for you, the New Moon brings good news in time to celebrate New Year's Eve!


### SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23-Dec 22 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 While you have had more than your fair share of shocks and shake-ups in 2016, December brings a gentle hand and warmth to steady you. Don't push yourself to do only what you think you must. If an opportunity to follow a dream or desire offers itself, why not reach out in response? Normally December gets a bit "heavy"—but you're able to prepare for a joyous New Year!

### CAPRICORN

Dec 23-Jan 20 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 This December, take time out to treat yourself. This may not normally occur to you, as you're busy holding things together for everyone else! Joy in beauty is inevitably yours, with Venus in Capricorn. Your star chart is set up to do almost everything, but at least no one will get in the way! The New Moon in your sign signals a reason to enjoy your New Year's Eve!


### AQUARIUS

Jan 21-Feb 19 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 Mars is in Aquarius the first few weeks of December. You'll have energy to complete projects and skedaddle away. Venus is in your sign too, starting the second week. There are gifts and memories to make and to share. Mercury goes retrograde before Christmas and carries on through New Year's. Be prepared for an authentically stellar time. Enjoy the traditions you create.

### PISCES

Feb 20-Mar 20 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

 You have dreams and vision, with Mars and Pallas Athene in your solar twelfth house. Your subconscious mind reaches deep. Then Mars high-tails it to Pisces in your first house of self, and finally you can take action! This happens mid-month in December, so if you're in a slow start, don't give up! You can do the things heaven has whispered. Get ready for a stellar New Year's Eve!



# WHY TOKYO?

BY POPPY REID



If you live in Japan, you may have been asked the question, why Japan? or sometimes, more specifically, why Tokyo?

It is a question I've heard many times, and a question I have a hundred different answers to.

The other day, I was tired and my stomach was rumbling after a long day at work. As I left the supermarket where I'd bought something for dinner, I heard a distant "excuse me!" I turned round, and the breathless cashier scurried up to me. She must have run over thirty metres to catch up, because I'd pretty much power-walked out of there so I could shove my pizza in the microwave as soon as possible.

"You dropped this," she panted, and placed a one-yen coin in my hand.

I smiled and thanked her. I couldn't stop grinning. You know you're in a wonderful country when something like that happens. A one-yen coin is virtually worthless, yet she had left her busy work station and gone out of her way to return it to me.

Japan has been my home for the last three years, and I honestly couldn't imagine living anywhere else.

You can learn a lot about Tokyo from various sources—the internet, for a start. But it isn't the low crime rate that keeps me here. It isn't the twenty-four-hour convenience stores, the reliable public transport system or even the fact that Disneyland is less than an hour away.

My love for this city can't be quantified by numbers.

It's the comfort of an empty evening train rattling through a bright city that never sleeps. It's the breath-taking illumination events in December by a nation that doesn't celebrate Christmas. It's the polite congratulations for a job well done, even after something arguably mediocre like an eye test or a language les-



**EVERYTHING HERE IS A MIXTURE OF TRADITION, POLITENESS, STYLE AND SAFETY. I NEVER FEEL THREATENED WHEN I'M WALKING AROUND AT NIGHT.**

son. It's the spirit of Tokyo that keeps me here, something you can't show with statistics.

As I read a book on my daily commute to work recently, I recognised the chime that played on the station platform before the doors slid shut. I frowned; it was a Disney song—"A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes" from Cinderella, if I wasn't mistaken. The next station played another one: "Hi Ho" from Snow White. It reminded me of the time they played the Dragon Quest theme song at Shibuya's Toyoko Line platform a few months ago. I didn't know why they were doing this, and at that moment, I didn't care. It put a smile on my face.

Everything here is a mixture of tradition, politeness, style and safety. I never feel threatened when I'm walking around at night. Tired businessmen clutching briefcases, young people frowning at their phones, teenagers chattering and hard-working, smiling shopkeepers who are like my friends. I feel content when I meander along the Shibuya Ward streets I know

so well, feel like I belong as I scan my train card to board the subway. This is my home.

I've heard stories, some amusing, some shocking, about being a so-called gaijin in this country. Maybe I'm lucky, maybe I'm blessed, or maybe I simply haven't noticed, but I always seem to avoid bad experiences concerning the fact that I'm not Asian. I feel more at home here in Tokyo than I ever did in wet old England.

When I ride the train, the bright advertisements on the wall, the familiar announcements as we approach the next stop and the rush of people getting on and off the carriage fills me with comfort and familiarity. The smell of cooking meat when yakiniku restaurants open for the evening fills me with excitement. Pachinko parlours and karaoke bars flash in welcome. Pedestrians dressed in casual wear, business attire, kimonos, Lolita style and everything else in between filter past each other, at peace, just going about their day. There's no gun crime, hate crime, violent protests. Warmth spreads through me as I stroll along, taking in the sites—Tokyo Tower dazzling red, bridges, cafes, Tokyo Skytree in all its bright wonder, temples and shopping centres, the mixture of metropolitan and traditional. I feel satisfied here. Content.

So if you're going to ask me, "why Tokyo?" be prepared to sit down and listen. Make a cup of tea if you like. Because Tokyo is my home.

■ Poppy Reid is a Scottish-born fantasy author who also writes about a variety of topics, including travel, fashion and video games.

# Face, Neck & Eye Area

## ■ Non-surgical

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Thread Lift, Nefertiti Lift, Smile Lift, V-shape face

## ■ Surgical

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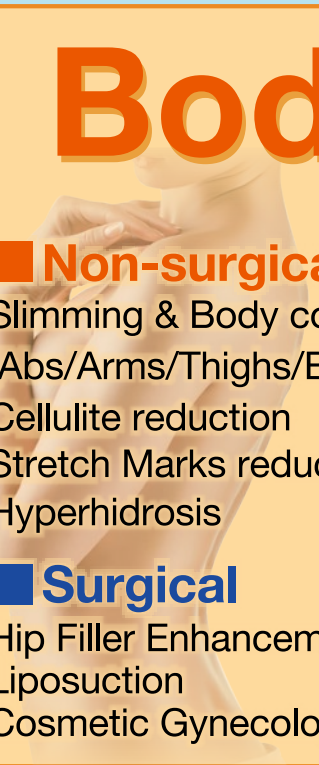
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